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MY COUSIN NICHOLAS.

Wm Preston

BY

THOMAS INGOLDSBY, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF "THE INGOLDSBY LEGENDS."

A New Edition.

LONDON:
G. ROUTLEDGE & CO. FARRINGDON STREET;
NEW YORK: 18, BEEKMAN STREET.
1856.

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1856

AVIS AU LECTEUR.

RESPECTED SIR—or MADAM (N. or M.,
as the case may be),—

In laying before you this little piece of family biography, it does not escape me that to an "N. or M." of your enlightened mind, a question may very naturally arise wherefore should I—Thomas Ingoldsby—throughout these memoirs, describe myself under the *alias* of Charles Stafford?

My dear Sir—or Madam—the fact is, that when, some seven years since, this veracious narrative first appeared in the pages of "Immortal Maga,"—a fly in amber, preserved only by the pellucid brilliance that surrounded it,—I had reasons, as plenty as blackberries, for preserving a strict *incognito*.

Inter alia.—Miss Kezia Ingoldsby, a lady who had a redundancy of virtues,—and £13,000 in the Three per Cents Reduced,—had not then shuffled off this mortal coil. She loved green tea, and hated an author. The bare idea of having such an animal in her own family would have been to her murder and sudden death.

"Breathes there" a nephew "with soul so dead," who, under such circumstances, would incur the guilt of auntycide?

I dared not take upon myself the responsibility of

massacring a maiden possessed of so much property in the funds.

Aunt Kezia ("rest and bless her!") has since exchanged her earthly employment of manufacturing *amateur* card-racks, carpet-slippers, and urn-rugs, for that of renovating an unmentionable portion of bachelor costume—elsewhere.

Then why continue the *alias?*

Why, the fact is, the alteration, now, would create a good deal of trouble, besides, perhaps, inducing a suspicion that there were no such persons *in rerum naturâ* as either Mr. Stafford or Mr. Ingoldsby.

Indeed, "I happen to know,"—as poor Tom Hill used to say,—that there are sceptical individuals who, even as matters stand, have not hesitated to aver that I have quite as much right and title to the one name as to the other.

Heed them not, gentlest of Epicines! Believe me when I assure you that wherever Charles Stafford is on the scene,

"Mutato nomine de *me*,
Fabula narratur!"

And that I am, and ever shall be,

With the most profound,
And down to the very centre of,
Gravity,
Your most devoted,

THOMAS INGOLDSBY.

Tappington Everard,
March 20, 1841.

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MY COUSIN NICHOLAS.

CHAPTER I.

Oh, love! love!—Love is like a dizziness;
It winna let a puir body gang aboot his business.
Old Song.

OF MY COUSIN NICHOLAS.—HIS BIRTH, PARENTAGE, AND EDUCATION.—SHOWING HOW HE CAME TO BE BORN, AND HOW I CAME TO BE COUSIN TO MY COUSIN NICHOLAS.—OF MY COUSIN'S FROLICS, AND THEIR RESULT.

My Cousin Nicholas was the liveliest, the sprightliest, the handsomest, and the cleverest little fellow in the world — so said everybody, — at least everybody that visited at the Hall; and "what everybody says must be true."

If there were any persons in the neighbouring village of a contrary opinion, they were of that description which usually comes under the designation of Nobody—the attorney, the parson, and the doctor, for instance;—besides, as my cousin seldom came in contact with either of these worthies without his genius effervescing in some juvenile prank at their expense, their opinions were naturally the offspring of prejudice, and, of course, the less to be relied on. As to my uncle, he looked upon this issue of his loins with mingled love and reverence, and frequently swore—for my uncle had contracted a bad habit of anathematizing—that "there was more wit in Nick's little finger" than in the entire corporeal economy of the whole parish, including the churchwardens and overseer.

Whether my uncle proceeded upon any particular

hypothesis in thus determining the locality of my cousin's talents, must remain a matter of conjecture; to those who favour the supposition that he did, it may afford no slight confirmation to observe, that Master Nicholas's jokes being invariably of a practical description, it is far from improbable that the seat of wit, in his particular instance—for one would not rashly oppugn a system in the abstract—lay rather in his fingers' ends than in the more recondite recesses of the pineal gland.

To those who maintain that my uncle never formed an hypothesis in his life, I have nothing to say.

This exuberance of fancy in my cousin was for ever exhibiting itself in a variety of shapes, and usually more to the surprise than the delectation of those who witnessed its career. Indeed, it must be confessed, that if wit, like all other good qualities, be, according to Aristotle's idea, a medium between two opposite extremes, my cousin's certainly inclined rather to the hyperbole than the ellipsis, inasmuch as it seldom happened but that, in the opinion of some one or other, he "carried the joke a little too far."

The education received by this hopeful heir of "an ancient and respectable family" was one commensurate with his abilities, and, in its earlier stages at least, admirably adapted to bring talents like his to their full maturity. His father, Sir Oliver Bullwinkle,—or, as he loved to write it, Bolevaincle,—was the highest blossom of the genealogical tree which hung in his study (a room so designated, *à non studendo*), and shot up into a variety of luxuriant and overhanging branches from a root coeval with the Norman Conqueror, among whose more immediate attendants stood proudly eminent the name of Sir Roger de Bolevaincle.

This worthy Paladin performed, it seems, such good service at the battle of Hastings and elsewhere, that he was, like many others, his brave compeers and co-mates in arms, rewarded by his victorious master, when at length securely seated on the throne of these realms, with the grant of a castle and a lordship, the forfeited fief of some outlawed Saxon noble: such, at least, was the

account frequently given by Sir Oliver to that most patient of all possible auditors, Captain Pyefinch; and if the style and title of his illustrious ancestor, through some unaccountable neglect, are not to be found either in "Domesday Book," or the "Roll of Battle Abbey," so trifling a circumstance can scarcely impeach the credit due to an historical truth in all other respects so well authenticated. Sir Oliver would have made an affidavit of the fact in any court in Christendom.

The Castle, it is true, had long since mouldered into dust,—"*perierant etiam ruinæ!*"—nor did a single stone remain to tell on what precise spot of the domain the feodal habitation of the valiant and venerated Roger had existed, or, indeed, whether it had ever existed at all. Not so with the estate,—the "dirty acres," as Sir Lucius O'Trigger somewhat disparagingly calls them,—the rich arable land and the luxuriant pastures, the homesteads, the copses, the majestic oaks (many of which might, from their appearance, have afforded a grateful shade to the renowned progenitor of the family),—these still continued unimpaired in beauty and much increased in value; while to the possession of them the present representative of the race was, perhaps, as much indebted for the respect and precedence yielded him at the quarter sessions, as to the long list of illustrious Bullwinkles who had jointly and severally contributed to produce him.

But if the pride of ancestry were among the most conspicuous foibles of Sir Oliver, it was by no means so predominant as to repress in him the inclination to associate with others, his neighbours, less fortunate in their descent. His exalted birth, like the vaunted prerogative of the first James, was rather a theme on which its possessor loved to descant, than a principle to influence his actions; and the worthy baronet's affability, especially to his grooms and gamekeepers, was even proverbial in the vicinity; nor was it long before Cupid, that most radical of levellers, who, as my Lord Grizzle so truly observes,

> "Lords down to cellars bears,
> And bids the brawny porter walk up stairs,"

exerted his equalizing influence on Sir Oliver, and convinced the most incredulous that the heart of his new votary was even more susceptible of love than alive to dignity.

The day had been cold, boisterous, and raw, the country deep and miry, while Reynard, taking advantage of all these circumstances in his favour, had led his pursuers a rather longer round than usual. The baronet reached his home, after an unsuccessful chase, chilled, wet, and weary: the length of his ride had occasioned a proportionate increase of appetite; and as the readiest way of getting rid at once of two such uncomfortable sensations as cold and hunger, or rather, perhaps, governed by that ruling chance which so often decides the fate of mortals, he declined the splendid glories of the saloon for the more genial comforts of the kitchen fire.

The ample grate blazed bright and cheerful: one end of it was occupied by—the cook!!—in the very act of subjecting a most delicious rump-steak to the discipline of St. Laurence: the flame reflected her glowing beauties to the oblique glances of her master, while the other extremity of the range administered the most vivifying warmth to his inmost recesses, as, with the skirts of his hunting-frock duly subducted and restrained by each encircling arm, he exposed to the fire that particular portion of the human frame which it is considered equally indecorous to present to a friend or an enemy.

Eleanor Skillet was round, plump, and—at this moment especially—rosy; and Cupid, who is seldom very dilatory in his proceedings, did Sir Oliver's business in the frying of an onion. Seating himself (somewhat too suddenly for his comfort) in a huge arm-chair, the ruggedness of whose wicker bottom was much at variance with the yielding softness of the cushion that usually supported his august person, the enamoured son of Nimrod, like another great man in a similar predicament,

> "Sigh'd and *ate*,
> Sigh'd and *ate*,
> Sigh'd and *ate*, and sigh'd again."

Nor did the impression made by the winning graces of

the buxom cook-maid prove a mere transitory fancy : in the parlour, in the field, or the bed-chamber, despite the distractive cry of the dogs, or the notes of what bachelors call the "merry-toned horn," her image failed not from this hour to present itself to his imagination : it even broke his rest ; and it is a well-authenticated fact, that during the three successive nights which immediately followed the culinary expedition alluded to, the most nervous person in the world might have reposed tranquilly in any chamber on the same side of the house with Sir Oliver, without having his slumbers invaded by the deep-toned bass of that gentleman's nasal organ.

The baronet, having once imbibed this master passion, was not a man to be long deterred, by any of that *mauvaise honte*—that distressing timidity which too often prolongs most unnecessarily the sufferings of impassioned swains—from making his ardent wishes known to the fair object that inspired them ; indeed, it has been shrewdly conjectured that the extraordinary wakefulness of the three preceding nights was the effect of consideration rather than of uneasiness, and had been produced rather by the operation of duly weighing within himself the "To be, or not to be?" than by any apprehension for the final miscarriage of his suit, should reflection eventually induce him to decide in the affirmative.

Of the precise nature of his original proposals, various were the surmises and reports current among the neighbours : certain it is that, four months after the decisive interview with Miss Skillet in the Hall kitchen,

> —— "to the nuptial bower
> He led her, nothing loth,"

and received at the altar of the parish church of Underdown the hand of the fair and lively Nelly, who, in something less than half a year afterwards,—being, as she averred, much alarmed by the noise and shouting of the rabble as she passed in her coach through a fair held on the village green,—presented him with a very fine little boy, marked on the back with a penny trumpet.

The robust and healthy appearance of the infant intro-

duced thus prematurely into the Hall, gave rise to many an admiring shrug, and many a sagacious shake of the head; often, too, would a trifling elevation of the shoulders, accompanied by a corresponding dropping of the eyelids, take place as the young heir of the Bullwinkles was exhibited to the occasional inspection of the gossips of Underdown; and many a significant tone as well as gesture, intended to convey much more than met the eye or the ear, accompanied the communication of the birth of the hero of these memoirs to his aunt, the sister of Sir Oliver, and mother to the humble biographer by whose unpractised pen this eventful history remains to be commemorated.

This lady, on the marriage of her brother, had retired from Underdown Hall, feeling, and indeed expressing, great indignation at the contamination caused by the hitherto unsullied stream of the blood of the Bullwinkles becoming thus intimately commingled with the plebeian puddle which stagnated in the veins of Nelly Skillet. Vain were all the remonstrances of her brother, who probably conceived that the aforesaid stream was infinitely too pure to admit the possibility of pollution, but that its clear current, like that of the majestic Rhone, must still flow on, undefiled by the accession of any meaner waters, which, though rolling in the same channel, it disdains to mix with, or to admit into its bosom. His utmost efforts did not avail to detain her one moment in the ancient seat of her ancestors, thus desecrated, as she conceived, by the reception of so ignoble a mistress. She accordingly quitted the Hall on the day previous to the celebration of these inauspicious nuptials, proceeding to the house of an old friend and schoolfellow. By this lady, the wife of a wealthy commoner in an adjoining county, she was most cordially received; and her inmate she continued till her own union with Major Stafford, the younger brother of a good family, to whom she had been long and tenderly attached; an event certainly accelerated by the circumstance which occasioned her secession from her brother's roof.

Major Stafford was, as I have already hinted, of high,

unblemished lineage; but Fortune, in bestowing this mark of her good-will upon him, had exhausted all her favours, and denied him that portion of the good things of this world so necessary to secure to rank the respect it claims. He was what is commonly called "a soldier of fortune,"—that is to say, a soldier of *no* fortune: but John Bull is peculiarly felicitous in misnomers of this kind. The man who demands payment under a threat of arrest, he terms a "solicitor;" names a cinder-heap in the suburbs "Mount Pleasant;" and calls a well-known piece of water the "Serpentine River," because it is *not* a river, and because it is *not* serpentine.

The major possessed little more than a high sense of honour, a generous and noble heart, a handsome person, his commission, and his sword. He was, in fact, the junior of three brothers: the elder, Lord Manningham, a general in the army, and, at the period of which I am speaking, on foreign service, was a married man with a family; the second, the Honourable Augustus Stafford, who was fast rising into eminence in his profession as a barrister, remained a bachelor; while Charles, the youngest, having felt no decided inclination for the Church, to which he had been originally destined, had resolved to enter the army, and with his sword carve out his way to that distinction which his lofty spirit panted to attain. My mother's fortune, though little more than six thousand pounds, added to the income derived from his commission, enabled them to live in comfort, if not in splendour, till the birth of myself, their first and, as it eventually proved, their only child, and left, to dispositions happy and contented as theirs, little else on earth to be desired. I was six years old when this state of calm felicity was broken in upon by the regiment to which my father belonged being ordered abroad. The demon of discord had again unfurled the standard of war; and my father, now Colonel Stafford, was forced to obey the rude summons which tore him from the arms of his wife and child to encounter all the inconveniences and hazards of the tented field.

Lady Nelly, meanwhile, in the full possession of all that

wealth and finery which, when in single blessedness, she had been accustomed to consider as rivalling the joys of Elysium, did not find her sanguine anticipations altogether realized by the event which had put these objects of her eager wishes so unexpectedly within her grasp. True that, instead of cooking an excellent dinner for others, she had now only to undergo the fatigue of eating it herself;—that London Particular Madeira, and an occasional sip of the best Cognac, had superseded Barclay's entire, egg-hot, and gin-twist; that the woollen apron, muslin cap, and pattens had fled before flounces and furbelows, a yellow silk turban with a bird of paradise to match, and a barouche and four:—nevertheless, many things were still wanting to complete her happiness, while many circumstances were daily occurring to render her situation irksome and uncomfortable in the extreme.

The new Lady Bullwinkle was by nature of a social disposition, and finding little to amuse or interest her in the few ladies of the neighbouring gentry, who, from electioneering motives, were induced by their husbands to leave their cards at her residence, she sighed in secret for the less dignified but more enlivening entertainments of that servants' hall which she had so rashly abandoned. She still infinitely preferred a game at "hunt the slipper," or the mystic rites of the Christmas mistletoe, to all the more refined methods of killing time, practised by ladies of the rank in life to which she was now elevated. This, her ruling propensity, however, she yet contrived sometimes to indulge, especially after the birth of my Cousin Nicholas, whose infantine wants frequently furnished her with an excuse for a descent to the lower regions; while, during the occasional absence of Sir Oliver, she was in the constant habit of witnessing, and to a certain extent joining with, "little master" in the merry pranks and facetious conceits of the parti-coloured gentry and abigails in the kitchen, who, sooth to say, particularly in those festive moments which mark the commencement and termination of the year, were much more encouraged by the condescension and the "largesse" of "my lady," than awed by her authority or abashed at her presence.

In so excellent a school, a boy of the most inferior abilities could scarcely fail of picking up much useful and valuable information; it is therefore far from surprising that a youth of Nicholas's great natural parts and lively genius should, in a comparatively short period, make such a progress as to create surprise and admiration even in his instructors. At eight years old my cousin was the veriest wag in Christendom. Besides being thoroughly initiated in the mysteries of "put" and "all-fours," "blindman's buff," and "threadle-my-needle," the superiority of his talents had evinced itself in a vast variety of ways; he had put cow-itch into the maids' beds, and brimstone into his father's punch-bowl; crackers into the kitchen fire, and gunpowder into the parlour snuffers; nay, on one peculiarly felicitous opportunity, when the annual celebration of his own birthday had collected a party in the great dining-room of Underdown Hall, he had contrived to fix a large bonnet-pin so perpendicularly erect in the cushion about to be occupied by the Reverend Dr. Stuffins as to occasion much detriment and inconvenience to that learned gentleman, whose agility on the occasion would not have disgraced Mr. Ellar, or the "Flying Phenomenon." In the course of the same eventful day, moreover, he subtracted a chair from the deciduous body of his papa's "legal adviser,"—amputated the apothecary's pigtail,—and, by the ingenious adaptation of a fishing-hook and line, previously passed through the pulley of a chandelier, elevated with a sudden jerk the flaxen jasey and redundant tresses, heretofore the *dulce decus* of Miss Kitty Pyefinch, to a situation emulating that of Mahomet's coffin.

For this last *jeu d'esprit* he was certainly reprimanded by his father with more of severity than he usually exhibited, Sir Oliver being penetrated with the most profound respect for the lady the honours of whose brow had been thus wantonly invaded. Indeed, the confusion of the party was not a little increased by the vehement anathematizing of my uncle, who, in the first transports of his indignation, so far forgot himself as to apply his foot, with a sudden and irresistible impetus, to that precise spot in my Cousin

Nicholas's system of osteology which appeared the best adapted for its reception, it having completely escaped the worthy baronet for the moment that the gout had for a little time past been coquetting with his own great toe, a circumstance which this rash manœuvre brought at once most forcibly to his recollection.

Nicholas up to this comparatively advanced period of his existence had formed no more distinct idea of physical force, as applied to his own person, than that which he might have derived from the vague intimation afforded by his nurse-maid's muse as she occasionally carolled,

"Dance-y, diddle-ey, Mopsey;
What shall I do with ye?
Set ye in lap,
And give ye some pap?
Or get a good rod and whip ye?"

As the menacing alternative had never been resorted to, he was, of course, equally astonished and incensed at the very unexpected manner in which his endeavours to contribute to the amusement of the company had now for the first time been received; he yelled like a catabaw, and ran roaring down to the kitchen, whither he was followed by Lady Bullwinkle, with a countenance more in sorrow than in anger.

After the lapse of some half an hour, passed in administering her consolations to his wounded spirit, her ladyship at length succeeded in assuaging the poignancy of his grief, and in somewhat softening the excess of his resentment; then having extracted from him a reluctant promise not to be comical any more that evening, she led him back to the parlour, apologizing, with a grace peculiarly her own, to the party, for the "sweet child's" having been "a little too funny." By the gentlemen her excuses were received with the most gratifying good humour; but Miss Pyefinch was by no means inclined to extend the olive-branch so easily.

This lady was a poetess—her soul all tenderness, sentiment, sympathy, and feeling; of course, her nerves were sadly shattered by this attack, and she hesitated for a moment as to the propriety of going into hysterics; but

fortunately recollecting that the execution of such a measure would, in the present state of her head-dress, be far from advisable, she very considerately deferred taking so decisive a step till a more convenient opportunity should present itself, and gathering up her spoils, hastily retreated to compose an ode "To Sensibility," in the course of which she took occasion to compare herself to Belinda, in the "Rape of the Lock," not omitting to cast a most Medusean glance on the offender, whom she encountered on the stairs in her retreat.

It would be tedious, not to say impossible, to recount the hundredth part of my Cousin Nicholas's brilliant sallies, of a similar description, that took place in the interval between this piece of pleasantry and an event which, for some time, had the effect of checking the ebullitions of his genius. This occurrence was the sudden death of his mother, Lady Bullwinkle, who having unluckily fallen from the top of the back stairs to the bottom, in consequence of treading on a few peas which my cousin had placed there for the express purpose of giving one of the maids a tumble, broke an arm and a leg. When borne to her room, she positively refused to abide by the directions of Dr. Drench, who, as she shrewdly observed, "only wanted to starve her into taking his poticary's stuff." She resolved, therefore, to abide by a regimen prescribed by herself, in which roast-goose, mock-turtle, and devilled sweetbreads, were prominent articles. To this diet she rigidly adhered, seldom exceeding a pint of Madeira at a meal; but whether it was that the injuries received were in themselves so serious as to baffle the art of medicine, or that, as Dr. Drench never failed to aver, her whole system of living was radically wrong, it somehow happened that a mortification ensued, which carried the poor lady off, within a fortnight after the accident.

CHAPTER II.

The brave Roland! the brave Roland!
False tidings reach'd the Rhenish strand
That he had fallen in fight!
And thy faithful bosom swoon'd with pain,
O loveliest maiden of Allemagne,
For the loss of thine own true knight!
Old Song.

RECONCILIATION.—AULD LANG SYNE.—THE BLARNEY-STONE.—RETURN OF THE KILLED AND WOUNDED.—"HARK! MORE KNOCKING!"

SOME six months after the decease of Lady Bullwinkle, my mother once more returned to take up her residence at Underdown Hall.

Poor Sir Oliver, although he had not absolutely "forgot himself to stone" on the loss of his lady, whose charms, sooth to say, had long since declined very much in his estimation, was nevertheless seriously inconvenienced by her decease. The cares of house-keeping, to which he had never in his life been accustomed, were heavy and grievous. Previous to taking upon himself the rosy fetters of Hymen, his household affairs had been conducted by his sister, whose prudent management he had somewhat missed on the keys of office being transferred to his late lady; but when she too was called upon, though under different circumstances, to retire from the seat of government, his situation was lamentable indeed. The affairs of the home department got into sad disorder; the servants, he said,—nay swore,—were worse plagues than any which infested Egypt of old;—over the men, indeed, he did with great difficulty preserve some little supremacy, but the women——! No, he must positively call in some more practised and efficient hand than his own to seize the helm and steer his labouring bark amidst the rocks and quicksands by which it was on all sides surrounded.

Two schemes especially offered themselves to his elec-

tion;—the one, to make advances to his sister, whose husband was now in the Peninsula, having left her in furnished lodgings in London;—the other, to raise Miss Pyefinch to the vacant throne. Pride and shame rendered him averse from the first measure; besides which, he was by no means certain that Mrs. Stafford would extend the olive-branch and come in to his terms; while a fearful awe of Miss Kitty's talents, and no very great inclination for her person (which certainly bore little or no resemblance to the "statue that enchants the world"), threw serious obstacles in the way of his second expedient. It is true that Captain Pyefinch, her brother, an invalid officer on half-pay, was a great proficient in the noble science of backgammon, and moreover very excellent company, seldom interrupting the most long-winded of the baronet's stories by any remarks of his own, which, of Spartan brevity, "few and far between," just served to convince his entertainer that his narratives were not thrown away on the listless ear of an unobservant or a somnolent auditor. The society of this interesting veteran would by the proposed match be at once converted from a casual good into a permanent blessing; but then the lady——

For Miss Catharine Pyefinch, a maiden who owned to six-and-thirty, the worthy baronet felt, it is certain, the greatest reverence and respect; but then reverence and respect are not precisely the sensations with which a hale widower, in Sir Oliver's circumstances, would wish to be wholly and entirely penetrated towards the proposed partner of his bed and fortune. In the first place, her learning was so transcendent that his own faculties were often bewildered in the vain attempt to unravel the meaning of her commonest expressions; then her sensibility was so exquisite, that if by chance, during her visits at the Hall, Sir Oliver found it advisable to horsewhip a refractory pointer, or kick an intruding cat out of the parlour, the scene never failed to overcome her; and if, which was too frequently the case, an unlucky oath would slide out of the wrong corner of his mouth in her presence, the shock was electrical, and rendered her completely *hors de combat* for the rest of the day.

With all this, the baronet had a high opinion of the good sense which enabled her to discover so many excellent qualities in himself; since, though she constantly assured him that they were open and visible to all mankind, still, with every disposition in the world to credit her, he could not, from the silence of everybody else upon the subject, but entertain some doubts whether these said excellences were altogether so obvious to others as her own fine perception induced her to imagine. Then, again, her verses were so delightful;—not that Sir Oliver piqued himself upon his taste for poetry, which, sooth to say, had usually a narcotic effect upon him, but her glowing muse painted so exquisitely the noble actions of the renowned Sir Roger, the sage decrees of the learned Sir Marmaduke (a Whig justice of the peace in the reign of Queen Anne, whose portrait adorned the mantelpiece in the principal saloon), and the innumerable virtues of the whole race of Bullwinkle, that, even without the well-merited eulogium on the existing representative of that dignified family, Morpheus himself must have thrown away his poppies, and hung on the recital with all the vigilance of the most insomnolent mouser.

Nevertheless, though the baronet's ears were tickled, and his vanity gratified, his heart was not subdued; and wisely reflecting that there was little apprehension of losing the captain's society, as he could not call to recollection that the gentleman had ever declined one single invitation to the Hall, or had hesitated to prolong his stay, when there, on the slightest intimation that such an extension would be agreeable to its inmates—remembering, too, that there was no reason to suppose Miss Kitty would cease to immortalize the glories of the family, though she were never to become herself a member of it—loth, moreover, to part so soon with his newly-acquired liberty—he finally decided, one eventful evening, after losing eight successive hits to the captain, and being somewhat annoyed by an incautious expression of the lady's aversion to tobacco, on writing to Mrs. Stafford, proposing a cessation of hostilities and requesting her to resume that station at the head of his household which

his unadvised nuptials had formerly induced her to renounce. Rome was not finished in a day, neither was Sir Oliver's epistle; both, however, were, after much toil and labour, completed, and the old butler was despatched to Upper Seymour-street, with the letter which had been so long in the concocting, and which he faithfully delivered into Mrs. Stafford's own hands.

My mother was surprised, and a little agitated on perusing its contents. Years had elapsed since she had quitted her paternal roof, without any expectation of revisiting it again; but the cause which had banished her thence was now removed, and a feeling, easily conceived, gave her a strong inclination to behold once more those scenes which, in her early youth, had been her home—her world. Habit and education had indeed combined to estrange her from her brother, more than is usual between members of the same family, even before his ill-assorted marriage; still a sincere, if not a very ardent, affection had ever filled her mind towards him; and, though somewhat quenched by the unfavourable circumstance alluded to, it was by no means extinguished, and she could not but confess to herself, that a reconciliation with him would be most grateful to her. Superadded to this, motives of economy spoke trumpet-tongued in favour of the measure. I was now at Westminster school, my father engaged in all the perilous scenes of a dangerous and doubtful war. The Honourable Augustus Stafford had lately departed this life, and having long since quarrelled with his younger brother, who had warmly resented some slighting expressions used by him relative to the marriage with my mother, had bequeathed whatever property he possessed to Lord Manningham, who still retained his government in the East. Should any unfortunate event occur to deprive me of a father, Underdown Hall would be a secure asylum for us both; while even at present, with the very limited income she was able to command, and the consciousness that all my hopes of a competency must rest upon her ability to save from her own expenses, it was a retreat pointed out to her as well by prudence as incli-

nation—at all events till the period of Colonel Stafford's return.

My mother was not long in resolving to accept her brother's invitation thus conveyed, and a communication to that effect speedily transmitted to my uncle the pleasing intelligence, that the proffered olive-branch was accepted, while it fixed a day for his long-estranged sister's re-appearance at the Hall. Thither, in fact, after taking a most affectionate leave of me, she repaired at the appointed time; as much, I believe, to the discomfiture of Miss Pyefinch, as to the real joy of Sir Oliver, who, after he had got over the little awkwardness of their first interview, scrupled not to declare that he had not felt himself so thoroughly comfortable since their separation.

For myself, I must own I was by no means pleased with my mother's new arrangements, especially when, in the ensuing vacation, I went down to spend my six weeks' holiday at the Hall. It is true, the frank good-humour of my uncle, and the evident pleasure he took in seeing me, soon won my regard, in spite of his peculiarities; but—I did not like the captain;—I did not like Miss Kitty, who had, however, contrived to make a friend of my mother, and was fast rising in her good graces in proportion as she declined in those of Sir Oliver.

This lady's conduct had indeed undergone a considerable alteration since Mrs. Stafford's arrival. Her muse was still prolific, but it was no longer the panegyric of the house of Bullwinkle that formed its exclusive theme. The baronet was no longer its object; all the poetic artillery of the fair Sappho was now levelled at my mother. She sang of the delightful union of two sensitive souls, and the charms of female friendship.—My mother smiled. She changed her strain to a recapitulation of all Mrs. Stafford's admirable qualities, attributing to her the excess of every virtue under the sun.—My mother frowned. She shifted her ground once more. The subject alike of her lays and her discourse was now the praises and merits of the gallant soldier, who, amidst dangers, difficulties, and death, still thought with fond-

ness on the only object of his affections, and panted for the hour when, his perilous duties all fulfilled, the pains of absence should be more than balanced by the transports of a joyful return to the embraces of his beloved.—My mother's flint began to melt, and an affection for me, as violent as instantaneous, which seized the good lady the moment I was introduced to her acquaintance, completed her conquest;—Miss Pyefinch had "never seen so fine or so engaging a boy;" and before that day was over, Mrs. Stafford hesitated not to affirm that "Miss Pyefinch was really a very sensible woman, and possessed one of the best hearts in the world."

Sir Oliver whistled, and left the room, muttering something in an under-tone, which, from the only monosyllable that could be distinctly heard, related in all likelihood to a female greyhound that followed him out of the parlour.

Despite the *encomia* with which I was overwhelmed by her, I cannot say that the manners of my new friend made a very favourable impression upon me; nay, I must own that with respect to my Cousin Nicholas (whom, by the way, I have too long neglected), my temper was even more fastidious. In vain did that facetious young gentleman exhibit some of the choicest specimens of his wit for my entertainment; in vain were the most jocose feats of practical ingenuity, feats which convulsed all the grooms and footmen in the house with laughter, brought forward to amuse me; in vain did he tie the wheel of a post-chaise, which had drawn up at a door in the village, to one of the legs of an adjacent fruit-stall, and occasion in consequence a most ludicrous subversion of the fragile fabric on the sudden movement of the vehicle, to the utter consternation of a profane old apple-woman, who loaded the unknown malefactor with her bitterest execrations;—in vain did he even exercise his humour on my own person, putting drugs of a cathartic quality into my soup, or removing the linchpins from a pony-chaise which I was fond of driving about the grounds, and thereby occasioning me an unexpected descent from my triumphal car, accomplished with far more of precipitation than grace—

still, I was so weak as to remain insensible to his merit, and even to look upon these sprightly sallies with some degree of anger and indignation. I have little doubt but that I must have appeared to him a very dull dog, and should, in all probability, have soon incurred his supreme contempt, but for an event which, I have since had reason to imagine, changed in some degree the nature of his feelings towards me.

The last accounts from Spain had stated the approximation of the two contending armies, and the public journals did not hesitate to speculate on the probability of an approaching engagement. These conjectures derived much additional strength from the contents of private despatches, and, among others, of letters received by my mother from her husband, who, from his situation on Lord ——'s staff, had good grounds for supposing such a circumstance to be very likely to take place. My mother's anxiety was, of course, extreme; nor could I fail to partake of the same feelings, when one morning, the rest of the family being already assembled at breakfast, my Cousin Nicholas, who was usually later than any other of the party, entered the room.

His countenance, unlike its usual expression, was serious, and even solemn; his step slow and hesitating, while a degree of disorder was visible in his whole demeanour. He took his seat at the breakfast-table in silence, and began to occupy himself with his teacup, bending down his head, as if with the intention of shading his countenance from the observation of the company. My uncle at this moment inquired for the newspaper, the invariable concomitant of his morning meal, and was answered by the butler that he had placed it on the table as usual, before any of the family had come down, except Mr. Bullwinkle, whom he thought he had seen engaged in its perusal.

"And pray, Mr. Nick, what have you done with it?" cried Sir Oliver. "I did not know you had been up so early."

"Done with it, sir?" stammered my cousin. "Nothing, sir,—that is, nothing particular. I have left it in my

own room, I dare say; I can fetch it, if you wish me, sir,—that is—but perhaps you will like to read it after breakfast?"—and his eye glanced significantly towards my mother.

Its expression was not to be mistaken. She caught the alarm instantly, and, rising from her chair, while her trembling limbs scarce sufficed to bear her weight, and her face turned ashy pale, exclaimed, "There is news from Spain! I am sure of it—and Stafford is killed!"

Her words were electrical, and a simultaneous conviction of their truth blanched every cheek.

"Killed!" returned my Cousin Nicholas; "no, my dear aunt—that is,—I hope not; but—there has been an action,—a severe one, and it is as well to be prepared."

Mrs. Stafford's worst fears were confirmed: she fainted, and was carried from the room. In the confusion of the moment, no one thought of inquiring into the sad particulars of the disaster that had overwhelmed us. Sir Oliver first asked the question, and demanded to see the fatal paper. My cousin immediately complied with the requisition, and produced it from his pocket; saying coolly, as he put it into his father's hand, that "he was sorry to see his aunt so discomposed, as his uncle Stafford might not, after all, be killed,—or even wounded, as his name certainly was not in the list of either the one or the other."

"Not in the list!" roared Sir Oliver. "Then what the d—l did you mean, you young rascal, by alarming us all in this manner?" and stood with an expression of countenance in which joy, surprise, and anger, were most ludicrously commingled: while I, as the conviction that my ingenious cousin had merely been once more indulging his taste for pleasantry flashed upon my mind, sprang forward in the heat of my indignation, and, with a tolerably well-directed blow of my arm, levelled that jocose young gentleman with the floor.

A yell, shrill and piercing as that of the fabled mandrake when torn by the hand of violence from its parent earth, accompanied his prostration, and the ill-concealed

triumph which had begun to sparkle in his eye at the success of his stratagem, gave way to a strong appearance of disgust at this forcible appeal to his feelings. But Sir Oliver, with all his partiality for his heir, was at this moment too angry to take up his cause: he ordered him instantly out of the room, while I hurried off to console my mother with the intelligence that the fears she had been so cruelly subjected to were altogether groundless, and that the affair, to use a frequent and favourite phrase of my Cousin Nicholas, was "nothing but a jolly good hoax from beginning to end."

CHAPTER III.

A doubtful fate the soldier tries
Who joins the gallant quarrel—
Perhaps on the cold ground he lies,
No wife, no friend, to close his eyes,
Or, vainly mourn'd,
Perhaps return'd,
He's crown'd with victory's laurel.

DIBDIN.

——— Facilis descensus Averni;
Sed revocare gradum, superasque evadere ad auras,
Hoc opus, hic labor est!

VIRGIL.

PENITENCE AND ITS FRUITS.—THE MORE HASTE THE WORST SPEED.—THE HORSE AND HIS RIDER.

I FOUND my mother still suffering severely under the impression that the blood of her beloved husband had mingled with that of many of his brave countrymen in crimsoning the plains of Talavera. Painful as it was to witness her distress, I almost dreaded to inform her that she had been imposed upon, lest the sudden transition from despair to extreme joy, on finding her apprehensions for his safety entirely groundless, should prove too much for her agitated mind, and plunge her perhaps into a situation still more to be dreaded than that state of

insensibility from which she was now beginning slowly to emerge.

Fortunately, while I was yet meditating on the best method of conveying the happy news to her with the caution it required, Dr. Drench was ushered into the apartment. The worthy old butler, on seeing the condition in which his mistress had been borne from the breakfast-parlour, had hurried, unbidden, in search of that gentleman's assistance, and had luckily found him at his own house, which was situate scarcely a hundred yards distant from the avenue leading to the Hall. When he arrived, the good doctor was in the very act of mounting his galloway, a tight little Suffolk punch of more "bone" than "mettle," in order to pay a visit to a patient. Of course no persuasion was necessary, under the circumstances, to induce him to alter his route for the present; and, having stored his pockets with a profusion of the usual restoratives, a very few minutes brought him to Mrs. Stafford's bedside. Taking him aside to the window, I, in as few words as possible, recounted to him the cause of my mother's sudden indisposition, together with the real state of the case, the assurance of which would, I was persuaded, prove the most effectual remedy for her disorder; then, leaving it to his discretion to announce the glad tidings in the manner most befitting the occasion, I retired from the room. The worthy doctor, not being blessed with a very keen relish for the ridiculous, was at first a good deal shocked at my narration, and, in the simplicity of his heart, cursed my Cousin Nicholas for "a mischievous young cub;" but then it may be observed in palliation, that Drench was but a plain man, with very little taste for humour. By his care and skill, however, together with the judicious way in which he communicated to his patient, after a free use of the lancet, the information which had indeed nearly again overwhelmed her, such beneficial effects were produced as to warrant him, on joining us in the parlour below, in holding out the strongest hopes that no ulterior consequences of a more serious or unpleasant nature would attend the execution of my cousin's frolic.

Sir Oliver pressed the doctor strongly to stay and partake of our family dinner: this invitation, however, frankly as it was proffered, he thought fit most positively to decline. Indeed, ever since the surreptitious abduction of his queue, which had taken place on the memorable occasion of the party formerly mentioned, he had been rather shy of committing his person within the four walls of Underdown Hall, except under circumstances of professional emergency. He had by this time, after infinite care and pains, succeeded in rearing another pigtail to a size and longitude nearly coequal with those of its lamented predecessor. It was once again *totus teres atque rotundus*, and its proprietor was therefore, not without reason, especially apprehensive lest the scissors of my Cousin Nicholas, scarcely less fatal than those of the Parcæ, might once more subject this cherished appendage to the unpleasant ceremony of a divorce. Despite, therefore, the Circæan allurements of a fine haunch of forest mutton, his favourite joint, Dr. Drench shook me cordially by the hand, bowed to Sir Oliver and the captain, and quitted the house.

My uncle, whose love and regard for his sister, always sincere, were, perhaps, greater at this than at any former period of his life, was truly rejoiced to find that no seriously unpleasant effects were likely to ensue from what, now his apprehensions were allayed, he again began to consider as a pardonable, though somewhat too lively ebullition of youthful vivacity: he had even begun to explain to the captain, for the five hundredth time, what a *desideratum* it was that a boy should have a little mischief,—a "little spice of the d—l," as he phrased it, "in him;" the captain, in no wise relaxing from his customary taciturnity, was very composedly occupying himself in arranging the men upon the backgammon-board, and neither assented nor demurred to a proposition which he had so often heard laid down by his host before; while I, in that restless fidgety state of mind which one feels when subsiding agitation has not yet quite sunk into composure, was endeavouring to divert the unpleasant current of my thoughts, by turning over the leaves of the last new

novel, brought by Miss Kitty Pyefinch from the circulating library at Underdown, when a strange medley of voices and confusion of sounds, portending some new calamity, and proceeding from the outward hall, arrested my attention, caused even the imperturbable captain to raise his eyes from his game, and drew from Sir Oliver Bullwinkle the abrupt exclamation,—"What the devil's that!"

The sounds evidently and rapidly approached; in a few seconds the parlour door flew open, and a figure, which, by its general outline only, could be recognized as that of Drench, occupied the vacant space, while the background of the picture was filled up by an assemblage of sundry domestics, bearing clothes-brushes, and rubbers of various descriptions, and exhibiting a set of countenances in every one of which respect, and a strong inclination to risibility, manifestly contended for the mastery.

The unexpected appearance of such a phenomenon excited scarcely less surprise and astonishment in my own mind than in that of Sir Oliver, who stood gazing on the apparition with symptoms of the most undisguised amazement, till a voice, broken by passion, and impeded by the mud, which filled the mouth of the speaker, stammered out—

"Look here, Sir Oliver! I beg you will look here—this is another of the tricks of your precious son Nicholas. His behaviour is unbearable,—he is a pest to the whole neighbourhood, Sir Oliver."

"Why, what on earth is all this about? What is the matter, my good friend?"

"Matter!—the devil's the matter—almost dislocating my neck's the matter. I am a plain man, Sir Oliver"—no one who looked in poor Drench's face could gainsay the assertion—"I am a plain man, and I now tell you plainly, that if you do not curb that young man's propensity to mischief, some time or other he will come to be hanged! Only see what a pickle I am in!"

The last sentence was uttered in a lachrymose whine, so different from the highly-raised tone in which the former part of the invective had been pronounced, that my uncle, who had begun to bristle at hearing the lineal heir of

Sir Roger de Bullwinkle consigned thus unceremoniously to the superintendence of Mr. Ketch, was immediately mollified, and his attention being thus pointedly attracted to the rueful appearance exhibited by the doctor, his anger was forthwith subdued. Dr. Drench was a little punchy figure of a man, standing about five feet nothing, plump and round as a pill; he was placed opposite to Sir Oliver, dilating his height to the very utmost; and if he did not on this occasion add a cubit to his stature, it was manifestly from sheer inability, and not from any want of inclination; his snuff-coloured coat, black silk waistcoat, kerseymeres, and "continuations," no longer boasted that unsullied purity, in all the pride of which they had quitted Underdown Hall not half an hour before: a thick incrustation of dark blue mud, agreeably relieved by spots of the most vivid crimson, now covered them with plastic tenacity, rendering their original tints scarcely discernible by the most microscopic eye. Nor had the visage of the unfortunate gentleman escaped much better, since, but for the sanguine current which flowed down the lower part of his face in a double stream, he might not unaptly have been compared to the "Man with the Iron Mask," so completely had the aforesaid incrustation adapted itself to the contour of his features.

If Pope's assertion be correct, when, following Ariosto, he pronounces that all things lost on earth are treasured in the moon, the doctor's well-brushed beaver was, in all probability, by this time safely laid up in that poetic repository of missing chattels, for below it was unquestionably nowhere to be found: its place, however, was supplied by a cap of the same adhesive material as that which decorated his face and habiliments, affording strong presumptive evidence that whatever portion of his person had first emerged from the ditch he had so lately evacuated, his head had at all events taken precedence on his entry into it. His pig-tail, too, that darling object of his fondest affection, to guard whose sacred hairs from the remotest chance of violation he had so reluctantly declined the baronet's proffered cheer, stood forth no longer a splendid specimen of the skill of Humphrey Williams, sole *friseur*

to the village of Underdown, but now exhibited indeed a melancholy resemblance to the real appendage of that unclean animal from which it had metaphorically derived its designation.

Rueful, indeed, was the aspect of the worthy disciple of Galen, as he underwent the scrutinizing gaze of Sir Oliver, who found it very convenient at the same time to have recourse to a family snuff-box which he usually carried about his person. In this mode of proceeding he was imitated by the captain, who now for the first time broke silence to request the favour of a pinch from the well-known *tabatière*, after which a more specific inquiry was instituted into the predisposing and proximate causes of Dr. Drench's disaster.

Those causes were, alas! but too soon made manifest.

My Cousin Nicholas, it seems, had encountered the doctor at the hall door on his return; and had stopped him to make inquiries respecting the health of his patient, whose indisposition he vehemently deplored, uttering a thousand regrets that a silly joke of his own should have produced it. For this he declared he should never be able to forgive himself; although, as he protested, it had never entered his imagination that the trick could have been attended with consequences so alarming. Touched by his remorse, the good doctor comforted him with the information that, if nothing occurred to produce a relapse, his aunt would not, he trusted, be so serious a sufferer as he had at first feared; he then seized the opportunity to read his young penitent a short but energetic lecture on the folly and wickedness (so he expressed himself) of thus terrifying, or even inconveniencing others, merely to gratify a silly and mischievous propensity.

My Cousin Nicholas listened to these well-intended and well-delivered observations with the profoundest attention; he heaved a sigh at their conclusion, and with a becoming gravity assented to their justice, at the same time volunteering a promise that this offence should be his last. Pleased with the effect of his own oratory, and nothing doubting that the contrition of the youthful offender was, for the moment at least, sincere, Dr. Drench

put one foot into the stirrup attached to his galloway, which a groom had now led out, and throwing his leg over the saddle, failed to remark that his proselyte had taken the opportunity afforded by his back being turned for the nonce, to introduce a large thistle beneath the tail of the quadruped on whose back he had now attained so perilous an elevation.

The effect was obvious and immediate: utterly unaccustomed to any application of a similar description, and highly resenting the indignity thus offered to his person, Punch, as sober a gelding as any in the three kingdoms, instantly evinced his sense of the degradation to which he had been subjected, by violent and repeated calcitrations, of no common altitude, and distributed in every possible direction. Becoming every moment more eager to relieve himself from so disgraceful and inconvenient an adjunct as that which now encumbered and annoyed his rear, he at length took the resolution of starting off at score, and soon deviated so much from his usually rectilinear mode of progression as to convey his unfortunate rider to the edge of a large sewer, into which all the filth and drainings of the Hall stables, together with other not less noisome concomitants, eventually flowed. Here, on the very brink of this abyss, an unlucky curvet, describing an angle of forty-five degrees, dismounted the hapless equestrian, and precipitated him head foremost into the centre of the "vast profound."

But for the groom, who had brought the doctor his horse, and who had witnessed the whole of the foregoing scene, poor Dr. Drench would probably have encountered a fate compared with which the not altogether dissimilar end of the "Young princes murther'd in the Tower" might have been esteemed a merciful dispensation, since, whether we subscribe to Walpole's "Doubts" or not, there is no reason to imagine that the means employed for the suffocation of the royal innocents was attended by that "rank compound of villanous smells," which served, in the present case, to heighten the catastrophe. By his assistance the sufferer was, with some difficulty, extricated from the imminent peril into which he had been plunged, and

was reconducted to the Hall, whither he once more repaired for the double purpose of complaint and depuriation.

These particulars were, not without some little trouble, at length collected from the soiled lips of the indignant doctor, and confirmed by the supplementary attestation of the servant who had observed the transaction, and whose levity in giving his evidence—the fellow absolutely grinned—drew down upon him a well-merited rebuke from the court. A summons was instantly despatched, commanding the immediate attendance of the accused; but my Cousin Nicholas was at this precise moment nowhere to be found.

That considerate young gentleman, on witnessing the "Descent of Drench," being well aware that liberty unexpectedly recovered is, in nine instances out of ten, abused, and most apt to degenerate into licentiousness, hastily followed the enfranchised steed, with the view of preventing any mischief which might accrue to himself or others from this his sudden manumission. The end of the avenue, which opened on the high-road near to the entrance of the village of Underdown, presented a formidable barrier to the farther progress of the liberated nag in the shape of a lofty gate, flanked on each side by a thick plantation of evergreens. To leap it was out of the question, as poor Punch held fox-hunting in utter abomination, and had never cleared anything more formidable than a gutter in his life;—to escape on either side was impossible, the shrubs were absolutely impervious; so, having discovered, during a moment of hesitation, what the headlong precipitation of his flight had hitherto prevented him from perceiving, namely, that he had long since got rid of his old tormentor, the thistle,—all these considerations, joined with the recollection that he had neither galloped so long nor so fast at any one time during the last fourteen years, induced the philosophic Punch to await quietly my cousin's approach, and once more to surrender his newly-acquired freedom without making a single struggle to retain it.

Having thus possessed himself of a horse, my Cousin Nicholas thought he would take a ride.

Many reasons concurred to render his availing himself of the opportunity particularly advisable:—in the first place, horse-exercise is strongly recommended by the faculty, and has a tendency towards bracing the nerves;—then it happened to be a remarkably fine day;—inclination prompted, opportunity courted him, and he was, moreover, morally certain, from the situation in which he had last beheld him, that the owner of his Pegasus stood in no sort of need of him at present; in addition to all which, an undefined suspicion had by this time entered my cousin's head that certain disputatious bickerings might, by possibility, arise at the Hall out of the circumstances which had so lately taken place, and that a controversy might ensue, in which he might find himself personally involved to an extent somewhat greater than would be altogether pleasant to his feelings. Now, my Cousin Nicholas hated argument and squabbling about trifles, nor was he ever known to enjoy a joke at his own expense.

Any of these motives, if taken separately, would have been sufficient,—there was no resisting them all in combination—so my cousin cantered away, and, having a pretty taste enough for the picturesque, was highly delighted by several charming prospects of the surrounding country which he encountered in the course of his ride. So much, indeed, did they engross his attention, that time slipped away unheeded, and he did not reach Underdown Hall, on his return, till long after the hour which had dismissed the doctor to his own "Sweet Home," as well scoured, scrubbed, and scraped, as if he had gone through a regular course of brick-dust, sand, and emery-paper.

CHAPTER IV.

Relictâ non bene parmulâ.
HORACE.

What, sir! do ye make us illegeetimate?
Sir Archy Mac Sarcasm.

THE "BOAST OF HERALDRY."—"THE PITCHER THAT GOES TOO OFTEN TO THE WELL," ETC.—A SCRAPE, AND A DEPARTURE.

THESE last freaks of my Cousin Nicholas were too important, both in their nature and consequences, to admit of their being passed over without some little notice. Dr. Drench, in addition to the deranged state of his wardrobe and osteology, complained bitterly of the injury sustained by Punch, who unluckily, from some cause or other, happened to fall very lame about this period, a circumstance which the doctor failed not to attribute to my cousin's equestrian performances; and he positively refused any further attendance, friendly or professional, at Underdown Hall, while it should contain so facetious an inmate. My mother availed herself of the occasion to renew, in the most forcible terms, certain suggestions previously made as to the propriety of her nephew's removal to some public seminary, where, under the pruning and training hand of a skilful master, those vigorous shoots of intellect might acquire a proper direction—hinting, at the same time, that considerable danger might arise, lest, like all other plants of equal exuberance, his genius, from being allowed to run wild and uncultivated, might eventually become weak and exhausted, or even perish immaturely, from the force of its own luxuriance. She even went so far, when once more sufficiently recovered to join the family circle, as to make his temporary secession from home the *sine quâ non* of her own continued residence there. It may, however, be doubted, after all, how far her well-meant remonstrances would have

succeeded with Sir Oliver in inducing him to part from his darling Nicholas, had not that young gentleman's star assumed at this time a peculiarly malignant aspect, and impelled him, in perfect contradiction to his usual custom, to direct the next effort of his wit against no less a personage than the baronet himself.

A long passage at the farther extremity of the mansion (used in the late baronet's time as a laundry, but dignified by the present with the name of the "Northern Gallery") contained, among much other curious matter, a series of portraits, representing sundry, real or supposed, worthies of the illustrious house of Bullwinkle. At the extreme end stood the redoubted Roger himself, or rather his armour, consisting of an habergeon, or shirt of chain mail, a cuirass, which some hypercritical Meyrick might not improbably have referred to a later age—a helmet, gauntlets, and shield; all of which had, till within these few years, occupied a niche in one of the aisles of the parish church of Underdown. They had there been long in the habit of swinging suspended over a tomb, on which the mutilated remains of a recumbent figure still reclined, though so much defaced as to render it difficult to pronounce, with any degree of certainty, whether it were the effigies of a human being or not. At its lower extremity, however, those parts which corresponded to the legs of a man were manifestly crossed, and this circumstance at once induced Sir Oliver to pronounce it to be the tomb of a Crusader,—and, if of a Crusader, *à fortiori*, of that flower of chivalry, the magnanimous Roger himself;—nay, so far did he carry his enthusiasm in favour of this hypothesis, that nothing but the sacred character of the offender, had prevented him in his earlier years from challenging a former incumbent of the parish, who observed, with more of levity than of reverence, that "the position was, undoubtedly, that of either a Templar or a tailor." This palpable attempt to detract from his venerated ancestor eight-ninths of his consequence in the scale of humanity my uncle never forgave. But to return.

On the death of the aforesaid scoffer, my uncle had obtained the consent of the Rev. Mr. Bustle, whom he

then presented to the living (the churchwardens, for divers weighty reasons, not opposing his wishes), to remove the several pieces of armour mentioned above from their exalted situation to his own house, and as a due acknowledgement of their politeness, Sir Oliver presented the parish in return with a handsome set of communion-plate for the use of the church.

Having secured his prize, the baronet's first care was to have the rust and accumulated impurities of so many years removed as much as possible, and the whole put into a complete state of repair, under the immediate and personal surveillance of the village blacksmith. In the course of the process, the remains of something like a device, which time and damps had combined to obscure, were discovered on the shield, and the delighted antiquary forthwith availed himself of the talents of a wandering artist, then luckily engaged in painting a new sign for the "King's Arms," to delineate (or, as he said, replace) upon its surface "three golden fetterlocks, clasped, in a field azure," the ancient heraldic blazonry of all the Bullwinkles. Thus renovated and restored to their pristine splendour, the arms of Sir Roger were erected in the manner of a trophy, over a pedestal inscribed with the knight's name, and placed in the most conspicuous part of the gallery. This was ever after Sir Oliver's favourite apartment, and thither he retired on the evening succeeding my mother's attack upon him, to reflect upon her request, and upon the alternative which had been presented to his choice.

My uncle perambulated the gallery for some time in silence, his hands crossed behind his back, and his eyes fixed upon the floor, while his footsteps, slow and unequal, betrayed the irresolution of his mind. His sister—so long lost, so lately recovered!—to lose her again seemed the very acme of misfortune, especially since the increasing comforts of his home, and his reduced expenditure, had taught him fully to appreciate her value. But then, again, his only son!—the beloved of his heart,—the delight of his eyes,—the youthful scion destined to transmit the blood of the Bullwinkles down to the remotest posterity,

—the last sole hope of an honourable name! True, indeed, Nick was, certainly, rather too bad—rather too much devoted to pleasantry, and of a disposition requiring the curb rather than the spur;—but then to banish him from the home of his fathers, an exile from those scenes which his progenitors had so long (in all likelihood) trodden—which somebody had unquestionably trodden, and Bullwinkles more probably than anybody else;—there was sorrow in the thought—it was *not* to be thought of.

"No!" exclaimed my uncle, facing about suddenly, and confronting the panoply of Sir Roger—"No!" cried he, extending his hand with the force and majesty of a Demosthenes, "never be it said that the heir of Underdown was, even for an hour, thrust like an expatriated fugitive from that roof which had sheltered so many generations of his forefathers!—never be it said that a youth of such noble endowments,—one so alive to the dignity of his family, so justly proud of his high descent and unblemished lineage, so"——

The glance of Sir Oliver rested for a moment on the emblazoned escutcheon of Sir Roger de Bolevaincle, whom he was just about to apostrophize—did that glance deceive him?—or had a miracle indeed been worked to cast a scandal upon his hitherto untainted pedigree? He paused abruptly, and stepped forward with all the agility he was master of, in order to convince himself that the object which had "seared his eyeballs," was but an "unreal mockery." But no! the phantasm, instead of vanishing at his approach, as he had half hoped it would have done, stoutly stood its ground, and presented to his horror-struck and incredulous gaze the apparition of a "*bend sinister*,"—that opprobrious mark of shame and illegitimacy,—drawn diagonally athwart the "golden fetterlocks in the azure field," the immaculate and ever-honoured bearings of the Bullwinkles,—while the family motto *Sans peur et sans reproche*, so noble and so appropriate, was rendered completely illegible by a broad streak of black paint.

Sir Oliver rushed from the gallery in a paroxysm of rage and astonishment. The servants,—every soul in the

house, from my mother down to the kitchen-wench inclusive, were examined as to their knowledge of the author of this piece of atrocity. No one, however, was found able or willing to throw any light upon the subject, till Miss Kitty Pyefinch suggesting the probability, "that, after all, it was only a joke of Master Nicholas's," one of the footmen recollected that, some two days before, a carpenter, employed in painting and repairing the fences in the grounds, had complained to him that Master Nicholas had run away with his paint-pot and brushes. The subsequent discovery and identification of these very articles in a corner of the gallery no longer left any doubt as to the person of the culprit.

The fate of my Cousin Nicholas was from this moment decided. A decree, as irrevocable as those of the Medes and Persians, was pronounced, and another fortnight saw Master Bullwinkle an inmate of the parsonage-house, occupied by the Rev. Mr. Bustle, who to his clerical functions superadded that of the master of the *menagerie* to "a limited number of select pupils," in a parish a few miles distant, which he held in *commendam* with that of Underdown. The term of my own holidays having expired, I also left the Hall upon the same day on which my Cousin quitted it, and returned to Westminster.

CHAPTER V.

Delightful task! to rear the tender mind,
To teach the young idea how to shoot!

THOMSON.

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heav'n to earth, from earth to heav'n;
And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE MARCH OF INTELLECT.—MUSÆ BULWINKLIANÆ.—HOW SLEEP THE BRAVE!

WHILE Mr. Bustle was labouring diligently in his Vocation as scavenger to the Augean stable of my Cousin Nicholas's intellect, and endeavouring, with all the persevering spirit of the most industrious kitchen-wench, to scour out certain stains and blemishes in his manners derived, as he said, from the defective mode of his early education,—while he was "preparing him for the University," by a very summary process, not unlike that by which poulterers in the metropolis are said to prepare turkeys for the spit, viz. by cramming them with all sorts of good things, till their crops are ready to burst through repletion—I was proceeding, through the usual routine of the foundation of which I was an *alumnus*, towards the same desirable end; and, as the plan adopted by my instructors was that of going on in the old, straightforward, beaten track used by our fathers before us, without bewildering themselves in the modern fashionable short cuts to the Temple of Knowledge, or "leaping learning's hedges and ditches," in order to arrive at their goal by a less circuitous route, it cannot be supposed that my progress in the *belles lettres* was half so rapid or so brilliant as that of my cousin. Indeed, the intellectual as well as the corporeal gullet of Mr. Nicholas Bullwinkle

was of an extraordinary capacity, and, from its amazing powers of expansion, might almost have warranted a suspicion that it might be composed of India-rubber. If its powers of digestion were not commensurate, but suffered the raw material which it received to remain crude and unconcocted, that could hardly be supposed to be the fault of his purveyor, the Rev. Mr. Bustle.

In point of fact, that learned gentleman was, in a very short time, mightily pleased with the proficiency of his new pupil, who, as he declared, evinced a decided taste for poetry, as well as for polite literature in general,—an opinion in which his father (who, to say the truth, was not, perhaps, qualified to do more than hazard a conjecture on the subject) perfectly coincided, so that in the space of a couple of years my Cousin Nicholas ran an imminent risk of being considered an absolute *lusus naturæ*, a prodigy of genius. His fame about the same time was fully confirmed and established by the *fiat* of Miss Pyefinch herself, whose exquisite tact and experience in all matters of this description rendered her, as we have before taken occasion to observe, sole and undisputed arbitress of the literary merits and demerits of every pretender within five miles of Underdown.

This excellent lady, whose prejudices at no very distant period had certainly operated considerably to my cousin's disadvantage, had been of late much propitiated by various effusions, some of them of rather an amatory cast, which, issuing from the pen of the young poet, had been, with the appearance of great devotedness, most humbly inscribed to herself; nor was the deportment of the juvenile bard, on his occasional returns to the Hall, such as wholly to supersede the idea that her charms, like those of the celebrated *Ninon de L'Enclos*, had achieved a conquest, and lighted up a flame in a youthful breast, when somewhat past what rigid critics might call the period of their maturity. Several of these tender lays were, by Miss Pyefinch, extolled above all that Hammond or Moore ever wrote; and though many persons were of opinion, from the hyperbolical compliments contained in them, that Mr. Nicholas had either taken leave of his senses,

or was only indulging his old propensity to "hoaxing," she never could be brought to subscribe to it.

One of these lyrics, containing less of passion and more of sentiment than the generality of his effusions, I shall take leave to present my readers with. It was placed by him in Miss Pyefinch's hand one fine evening after his return from a solitary ramble in the garden, having been rudely written down with a pencil, and is, on the whole, no bad specimen of my cousin's poetical abilities.

THE POET'S BOWER.

A bower there is, a lowly bower,
In which my soul delights to dwell;
No gorgeous dome, or storied tower,
Can charm my fancy half so well!

No Zeuxis e'er its walls adorn'd,
No Phidias bade its columns rise;
Such aids the humbler artist scorn'd,
Nor taught its towers to court the skies.

But the low wall's contracted bound
The Ivy's amorous folds entwine,
And wanton Woodbines circling round,
To deck the blest retreat combine.

The Lilac, child of frolic May,
There flings her fragrance to the breeze;
There, too, with golden tresses gay,
Laburnums wave in graceful ease.

And there, in loveliest tints array'd,
How sweetly blooms the blushing Rose!
While round a soft and varying shade
The Willow's bending form bestows.

Far in my garden's utmost bound
The modest mansion rears its head,
There noisy crowds are never found,
No giddy throngs its peace invade;

No "stores beneath its humble thatch,"
Like Edwin's, "ask a master's care;"
The wicket, opening with a latch,
Receives the lonely swain or fair.

Within inscribed, above, around,
Are lines of mystic import seen ;
And many a quaint device is found,
And many a glowing verse between.

'Tis here, at morn or dewy eve,
In meditative mood reclined,
The world, its pomps and cares, I leave,
And shut the door on all mankind.

Full many a tome's neglected weight,
Here, page by page, mine eyes survey ;
Full many a patriot's warm debate,
And many a youthful poet's lay ;—

Sweet ! oh sweet, the evening hour !
'Tis then I bid the world farewell,—
'Tis then I seek the lonely bower
In which my soul delights to dwell !

Miss Pyefinch was charmed with this production of my cousin's muse ;—the only thing that puzzled her was, whereabouts this nice little retreat could possibly be situated, as memory refused to supply her with any edifice about the grounds at all answering the description given of it.

Sir Oliver, indeed, hazarded a suggestion, but the fair Sappho was highly scandalized at the insinuation it contained ; and most indignantly rejecting the solution offered, finally concluded that the whole was merely a flight of fancy, or, as she was pleased to phrase it, "a Poetic fiction."

* * * * *

The period was now rapidly approaching at which it was thought advisable that I should be removed from Westminster to the University. I was turned of eighteen, tall and active, and furnished with a sufficient *quantum* of Greek and Latin to make my *début* among those classic scenes, without any violent apprehension of a failure. Colonel Stafford had been for some time in England ; his constitution, originally not a strong one, had been much injured by the exertions, privations, and fatigues, necessarily attendant on a desultory and protracted series of campaigns ; of late, too, the mode of

warfare had begun to assume a more decided character, and the "marchings and countermarchings" were now, as the plans of the great commander who directed the operations changed from the defensive to the offensive, interspersed with skirmishes and actions, dangerous in the extreme during their progress, though ever glorious in their results.

Frequently exposed, from the nature of his official situation on the staff, to the hottest fire of the enemy, and urged by the innate gallantry of a disposition rather impetuous than prudent, into dangers which he might perhaps without discredit have avoided; still the "sweet little cherub that sits up aloft" seemed to watch over my father's safety with unwearied vigilance. Often was the weapon levelled by man, but Heaven averted the ball; and, with a single exception, he came out of every conflict scathless and uninjured.

It was not till after his return to England, whither he was at length despatched with the official accounts of the battle of ——, and his subsequent retirement into the bosom of his family, that the ravages made in his health, by his long-continued subjection to the hardships of a military life, passed under the inauspicious combinations of an active enemy and an ungenial climate, were fully apparent. A wound, too, originally of a trivial nature, as his friends had been taught to believe, but which had never been entirely healed, now joined to occasion alarm to his friends, and to give a character to other symptoms which betokened a sure though gradual decay.

Mrs. Stafford for a while shut her eyes, and remained obstinately blind to what was perfectly apparent to every one else; she fondly flattered herself that the increasing debility of her husband might be successfully combated by quiet, his native air, and the soothing attentions of conjugal affection.—Alas! her hopes were groundless;—the hectic on his cheek became, it is true, more vivid, but it contrasted painfully with the sallow paleness of the rest of his countenance, while a short dry cough, and his attenuated form, evinced but too surely that his stamina were affected, if not reduced.

The symptoms were but too prophetic: as spring (the third since his return) advanced, his inability to contend longer against disease became daily more evident, till early in the fatal month of May, a month so critical to invalids, my dear father resigned his upright and honourable spirit into the hands of Him who gave it.

My poor mother was overwhelmed with the most profound grief by this melancholy event; the more so, as although of late the conviction had been forced upon her that Colonel Stafford was in a rapidly declining state, still she had never contemplated the probability of so sudden a dissolution of those ties which formed the principal joy of her existence. It was done, however. Those ligaments of the soul which bound her to an adored and adoring husband, were at length severed; and till their reunion in a future world, I was the only object to which she was now to look for comfort and support. My father's death had been so sudden, that I had barely time to reach home, from Christ Church,—of which I had some time since become a member,—in order to receive his last blessing. He died like a Christian, calm, fearless, and resigned, with his latest breath commending my mother to my care.

Years have since rolled on, but the moment is fresh as ever in my memory. May I never forget it!

CHAPTER VI.

He saw her charming, but he saw not half
The charms her downcast modesty concealed.
THOMSON.

A LETTER.—A JOURNEY.—MUSIC HATH CHARMS.—DUCKING AND DODGING.—A CHASE.—THROWN OUT AT LAST.—STOLEN AWAY.

LITTLE of moment occurred either to myself or my friends during the next two years. My mother was still an inmate of Underdown Hall, where her attentions were now become absolutely indispensable to the comfort of her brother. A settled, but calm melancholy, had succeeded to those severer transports of grief which had engrossed every faculty of her mind during the first burst of her affliction at the loss of my father, and now, if not happy, she was at least resigned. My Cousin Nicholas had entered himself a gentleman-commoner at Brazenose College, but so widely different were our pursuits and habits that, although such near neighbours, we saw but little of each other; nevertheless, a tolerably good understanding was kept up between us, and, though rarely visiting, we always remained upon terms of civility.

One morning, at a rather earlier hour than was customary with him, Nicholas made his appearance at my rooms in Peckwater, and invited himself to breakfast with me. I soon found that his object in paying me this friendly visit was to borrow a little money, a circumstance which had occurred once or twice before, at times when his exchequer had been at a low ebb. My own finances happened on this occasion to be by no means in a flourishing condition, and I was on the point of confessing my inability to accommodate him at present, when a letter was delivered to me by the "scout," which, from its size and weight, appeared to contain an inclosure.

It was from my mother, requesting to see me immediately, "upon urgent business," which, as she informed me, was of a nature calculated to influence, and that very materially, my future prospects in life. She declined entering into particulars till we should meet, conjured me to lose no time in setting out to join her, and expressed her hopes of seeing me on the third day, at latest, from that on which I should receive her epistle.—The inclosure was a remittance of sufficient magnitude to obviate any difficulties of a pecuniary nature which might tend to retard my progress.

This supply came very seasonably for my Cousin Nicholas, with whom I immediately shared it, as the moiety would, I found, amply provide for my own wants on the journey I was about to undertake,—a journey the necessity for which I did not hesitate to acquaint him of, and heard, in reply, that the reason which had induced him to apply to me for assistance, was the impossibility of his otherwise carrying into execution a scheme he had entertained of proceeding *incognito* to London, for some particular purpose which he had in view. As he did not explain what this particular purpose was, I thought it unnecessary to inquire into it, but acceded at once to the proposal which he now made, that we should travel to the metropolis together.

Little preparation was necessary for either of us. I hastily threw a few articles of dress into a portmanteau, and, through the interposition of my tutor, found no difficulty in obtaining leave for my immediate departure, more especially as I had already resided the number of days requisite for keeping the term, and the Easter vacation was at hand.

Not so Nicholas: his irregularities had of late been too notorious for him to obtain permission to secede one hour before the appointed time. This unlucky circumstance, however, he found means to obviate by placing his name on the sick-list, or "pricking *æger*," as he technically termed it; when, having directed his servant to draw his commons regularly from the buttery till his return—feeling, moreover, a moral certainty that this injunction

would be faithfully observed, inasmuch as the said commons would of course be applied to the sole use and benefit of the receiver during the interval—he walked with the greatest possible composure over Magdalen Bridge, and was taken up by my post-chaise at the foot of Heddington Hill, where the somewhat longer, but by far the most picturesque, of the two roads that lead to the metropolis turns off abruptly to the right.

The day was beautiful, and my cousin, on finding himself clear of the environs of Oxford without detection, proceeded to disencumber himself of sundry large silk handkerchiefs which enveloped the whole of the lower part of his face, and bade adieu to a voluminous surtout, which had also assisted materially in disguising his figure during his walk. The silver waves of old Father Thames rolled at our feet in many a shining meander, through a scene of more than Arcadian loveliness, as we entered the town of Henley. Here we partook of a hasty dinner, when, eager to reach London, I resolutely resisted all Nicholas's covert insinuations respecting the excellence of the wine,—"the best by far he had ever tasted at an inn,"—as well as his more open proposals for the discussion of one more "quiet" bottle. The horses were again put to, and in due time deposited us safely at the Tavistock Hotel, in Covent Garden.

Having drunk a cup of coffee, and got rid of the uncomfortable sensation which usually succeeds a journey, however easily and pleasantly performed, Mr. Bullwinkle once more suggested that a bottle of Lafitte would prove an excellent succedaneum in the absence of all other amusement, observing, at the same time, that the day being a Wednesday in Lent, and all theatrical entertainments of course suspended, he should not otherwise "know what to do with himself."

My head was so full of conjectures as to the nature of "the urgent business" which had occasioned my being thus suddenly summoned from my studies, and my mind was so exclusively occupied in forming a thousand improbable guesses on the subject, that I should in all likelihood have acceded to the proposal, from mere anti-

pathy to any change of place which might tend to disturb the current of my ideas, had I not plainly perceived that the Madeira which we, or rather he, had swallowed at Henley, had already performed its part, and elevated my cousin's spirits quite as high as prudence would sanction. Well knowing that his general propensity to get into scrapes wanted not any excitation from the "Tuscan grape" to call it into play, I once more positively declined joining him in his potations; and in order to prevent his sitting down and getting drunk by himself—an alternative which I had little doubt he would adopt—proposed that, as neither play nor opera was exhibiting, we should look in at Covent Garden, and listen to the delightful music of "Acis and Galatea." Nicholas said—indeed, swore—that an Oratorio was "the greatest of all possible nuisances," and that he would as soon "be crucified" as listen to one; but finding me absolutely determined not to "make a night of it," he at length, though with undisguised reluctance, agreed to accompany me rather than "snore over the bottle" by himself.

We found the house very full, and being still in our travelling-dresses, resolved, in order to avoid the risk of encountering any of the more fashionable part of our acquaintance in the present deranged state of our habiliments, to go into the pit; for at the period to which my narrative refers, the "customary suit of solemn black" worn in the boxes by both sexes during Lent, at what were then literally "performances of sacred music," had not yet yielded to the innovating hand of modern illumination. Our intention was carried into effect not without some little difficulty, for on our arrival every seat was occupied, and we were glad to take up our stations in "very excellent standing-room" near one of the benches, at no great distance from the orchestra.

The fascinating siren, Stephens, who had then just reached the zenith of her reputation, was never in finer voice; and whatever unwillingness Nicholas might have originally felt to be "bored with their confounded catgut," still even he was not entirely proof against such enchanting melody. As to myself, with a mind naturally delight-

ing in the concord of sweet sounds—a taste I had inherited from my mother, whose whole soul was attuned to harmony —I had for some time neither eyes nor ears for anything but the fair songstress on the stage ; till at length, during a temporary cessation of her exertions, occasioned by a movement in the accompaniment, a slight and half-suppressed exclamation of delight drew my attention to my immediate neighbour, who occupied a corner of the bench close to which I was standing.

It was a female, clad, like the major part of the audience, in mourning, over which was thrown a loose garment of gray cloth, then termed "a Bath cloak ;" nor did anything in her dress indicate a superiority over the generality of those who usually occupied that portion of the theatre in which she had placed herself ; still the whole appearance, both of herself and her companions, evinced their respectability.

These latter consisted of an elderly female in the modest garb of middle life, having much the appearance of a substantial tradesman's wife, and a lad whom I conjectured to be her son : the latter was about sixteen years of age, and, by his frequent yawns and sleepy demeanour, seemed to be a fellow-sufferer with my Cousin Nicholas, and to have imbibed at least some portion of that *ennui* which the latter always professed to feel, and probably experienced, whenever he entered a music-room. On these two, however, I bestowed but a very cursory glance, my whole attention being immediately and involuntarily engrossed by the lovely creature to whom the old lady performed the office of *chaperon*, for that any closer connection existed between her and the being who was fast becoming the object of my idolatry, my whole soul revolted from believing.

Early accustomed to mix in good society, I had enjoyed many opportunities of seeing most of the celebrated *belles* of the day ; but never, in the whole course of my experience, had I met with a form and countenance so well calculated to make an impression on the susceptible heart of a romantic and amorous youth of one-and-twenty. She appeared to be some three or four years my junior ;

her complexion was dazzlingly brilliant, her features were cast in the finest mould of beauty, while the vivacity and intelligence that sparkled in her dark-blue eyes evinced the powers of the mind within, that gave animation to so expressive and charming a countenance. The fixed intensity of my gaze at length attracted her notice, and she blushed deeply as her eye sank beneath mine; yet was there a something, in the occasionally recurring glance which I encountered, that told me her shrinking from my regard was rather the effect of modesty than displeasure.

While I was meditating in what manner I should introduce myself to one who had already made a much greater progress in my good graces than even I myself was aware of, "that which not one of the gods could venture to promise me, chance spontaneously offered to my acceptance."* One of the light-fingered fraternity, who so generally frequent places of amusement, was, while labouring in his vocation, detected by my Cousin Nicholas in the very act of clandestinely subtracting from the coat-pocket of the sleepy-looking youth just mentioned, as it stood most invitingly open, a large silk handkerchief, therein deposited till the termination of the performance should restore it to its original use, that of protecting the lower part of his physiognomy from the rawness and inclemency of the night-air. Now, as it formed no part of my cousin's system of politics to sanction any mischief that neither amused nor interested him, and as he foresaw in a moment that the bustle consequent on the detection of so nefarious a piece of delinquency might probably do both, and be infinitely more agreeable and enlivening than even the music of the spheres, had he been within hearing of their celestial harmony, he hesitated not an instant to proclaim his acquaintance with the deed then in the course of perpetration, and to interrupt the meditated retreat of this dexterous conveyancer.

* Turne, quod optanti Divûm promittere nemo
Auderet, volvenda dies, en, attulit ultro.
VIRGIL.

The disturbance which ensued may be imagined. The offender, thus taken in the very act, or, as the Scotch have it, "with the red hand," found it useless to deny, and impossible to justify, his unauthorized appropriation of another's chattels. A portion of the surrounding spectators prepared immediately to put in force that very summary law of which the mobility of England might, in those days, have been considered at once the framers, the expounders, and executioners, but which, much to the regret of all good citizens, has of late years sunk into desuetude. No one then dreamed, in such cases, for one moment, of "the new police," or an appeal to "his worship:"—to their own salutary decree did they have immediate recourse; which said decree, as it was not to be found in any of the books, belonged most probably to the "unwritten or common law," and directed that the guilt of the criminal should be forthwith washed and purged away through the medium of the nearest pump.

> "Between the acting of a dreadful thing
> And the conception, all the interim is
> Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream."

And so it was on the present occasion. While that highly respectable part of the community to which I have just alluded were, in the exercise of their undisputed prerogative, hurrying off to condign punishment the atrocious depredator "vot had prigged the gemman's wipe," in full accordance with the statute (by them) in that case made and provided, considerable confusion arose in the immediate vicinity of the transaction: certain ladies shrieked, others fainted, while a few *ultras* both shrieked and fainted. My charmer did neither; but the agitation of her manner, and the lily, now fast usurping the place of the rose, upon her cheek, showed that she was not altogether insensible to alarm.

Perhaps there is no moment so favourable for a lover as that in which the object of his affections either is or fancies herself to be in danger, with no other protection to fly to but his own. I failed not to seize the golden opportunity, and improved so well the few minutes of

bustle which ensued, as not only to introduce, but to ingratiate myself considerably, both with the damsel and the matron. As to the "lubberly boy," this little *fracas*, in which his handkerchief had borne so distinguished a part (an article, by the way, which the gentleman who had rescued it from the fangs of the pickpocket when Nicholas seized his collar forgot, in the excess of his indignation, to return to its owner), had given a fillip to nature, and he was actually wide awake for a full quarter of an hour; but as his mind was entirely occupied by the magnitude of his loss, his presence gave me not the slightest molestation.

I was much more annoyed by Nicholas, who, in spite of my endeavours to keep him in the background, would occasionally interfere; nor could I help heartily wishing that he had carried his love of justice so far as to have gone and assisted at the ceremony of immersion—whether as *pumper* or *pumpee*, I should not have cared one farthing. As things stood, I was obliged to let matters take their own course; though I certainly could have dispensed with his society when, at the conclusion of the Oratorio, he made a daring, though happily an unsuccessful, attempt to induce the young lady to accept his assistance in getting clear of the crowd, and to leave me the more honourable but less pleasing post of acting as escort to her antiquated companion. This arrangement, however, I was sufficiently on the alert to frustrate, and almost dared to flatter myself that the nymph lent her aid in rendering vain his manœuvre, as she thankfully accepted my arm, and afforded me the inexpressible delight of conducting her to a hackney-coach, which had apparently remained in waiting for the party. But notwithstanding the footing I had contrived to gain by my attention to their convenience during the disturbance, as well as afterwards, I nevertheless found it impossible to extract, from either the young or the old lady, the secret of their address, and was inexpressibly disappointed when, having placed them in the coach, and received their acknowledgments for what they termed my politeness, the matron, simply saying to the coachman, "To the house you brought us

from!" made me a most gracious bow, and drew up the window.

The vehicle was in motion the next minute, but not before honest *Jarvis*, in return for a half-crown piece, had sold me the interesting intelligence that the place of his destination was Jermyn Street. Determined, however, to be fully satisfied as to the accuracy of my information, as well as to ascertain the particular house to which the party was bound, I failed not to follow the coach, which proceeding at a very moderate pace, enabled me to keep it in view without any difficulty, till I saw it eventually disembogue its precious contents at the door of a respectable-looking house in the street above named.

My first care on having thus fortunately, as I supposed, succeeded in "marking the covey down," was to put myself in possession of the number of the mansion; which done, I proposed to return for the present to the hotel. But this arrangement by no means met the ideas of my Cousin Nicholas, who had kindly, and without any solicitation on my part, accompanied me in the chase. He now found himself, at its termination, very unexpectedly, in the immediate vicinity of an edifice which contained an object possessing charms, to him not less attractive than those which had operated to bring me into the same neighbourhood. This object of my cousin's devotions was a certain table, most beautifully variegated and adorned with a motley covering of red and black cloth, exhibiting, moreover, the delightful accompaniment of sundry packs of cards, together with all and every the sacrificial instruments necessary for offering up human victims at the shrine of Plutus. Many were the persuasions made use of by my cousin to induce me to accompany him into the penetralia of this temple of Mammon, the more recondite mysteries of which he very kindly offered to initiate me in. Resisting all his importunities to engage in so dangerous a pursuit, and finding it useless to persuade him to alter his own determination, I at length quitted him in the street, and retraced my steps to the Tavistock, —to dream of an angel,—in a Bath cloak.

The following morning I arose an hour before my usual

time, and scarcely allowed myself a few moments to swallow a hasty breakfast, so eager was I to avail myself of the little services which I had been fortunate enough to render my goddess the night before, by calling to "hope she had experienced no serious ill effects from her alarm." I was, besides, in a complete fidget lest Nicholas, too, should be taken with a freak of early rising, and should insist on joining me in my proposed visit. In this respect, however, my fears were perfectly groundless, as I found, on inquiry, that worthy had not been very long in bed, having, as I doubted not, spent the major part of the preceding night in that rapturous vacillation of spirit produced by the alternation of good and bad fortune in some exciting game of chance. He was still sound asleep: I took good care not to disturb him, and set out on my adventure alone.

However deserving they may be, we know that "it is not in mortals to command success,"—a truth which I was destined to experience most painfully in the present instance.

On applying at the house in Jermyn Street, I was astounded by the information that no ladies, answering the description which I gave, resided there at all, although two such had certainly taken tea the day before with Mrs. Morgan, a lodger who occupied the "first floor;" that they had afterwards gone away in a hackney-coach, —to the theatre, it was believed,—and had returned late in the evening, but that they had only remained a few minutes, when, having partaken of the contents of a tray which had been set out in expectation of their arrival, they had finally taken their departure in a handsome dark-green chariot, which came to fetch them away.

This, at least, was the account furnished me by the servant girl, whose good offices I secured by a trifling present, and who also informed me, that she had never seen the younger lady of the two before, and the elder not above three or four times.

Much disconcerted at this intelligence, I could not refrain from cursing my own stupidity in allowing them thus to escape me, though wiser heads than mine might

have been puzzled to know how to have prevented it, as not the slightest suspicion of their being merely visitors at the house to which I traced them, had ever entered my mind. My only course was to promise the girl an additional gratuity, if she could succeed in learning the place of their abode; which done, I walked, with a very different step, and in a very different frame of mind from that in which I had set out, towards St. James's Park, revolving with myself the means which it would be most advisable for me to adopt, in order to obtain the wished-for intelligence. Nor did it fail to present itself to my recollection, that a very short time indeed was left me to make the necessary inquiries, unless I should altogether give up the idea of attending my mother's summons by the day appointed in her letter. Twenty-four hours, however, I thought I could command, and wonders might be achieved in half that time by a sincere and enterprising lover; but vain were all my efforts to discover my fair *incognita;* in vain did I traverse half the streets at the west end of the town; in vain did I peer and peep into every shop I passed, and scrutinize every window with the keenness of a familiar of *La Santa Hermandad.* Once, indeed, I thought I caught a glimpse of a figure similar in the delicacy of its proportions to that of my charmer, and my heart beat high with hope renewed; but, alas! only to increase my disappointment, when, after I had sorely bruised my shins, and beat all the breath out of my body by "making a cannon" between an apple-barrow and an old clothesman, in my hurry to "head" the fancied angel, my eyes were blasted by the sight of a face as hideous as age and ugliness could make it.

Weary and dispirited, I at length gave up my fruitless chase; but, ere I returned to my hotel, resolved on making one final and desperate effort to recover the scent. With this view I entered a jeweller's shop, whose windows displayed "an elegant assortment" of trinkets, and having purchased a plain but handsome vinaigrette, which I afterwards replenished at a perfumer's, once more retraced my steps to Jermyn Street. From my new auxiliary, the maid, I soon learned that I had nothing farther

to expect in that quarter, at present, in the way of intelligence, and therefore boldly demanded to see Mrs. Morgan herself.

Fortunately, as I then imagined, that lady was at home; so, desiring the girl to announce me simply as "a gentleman on business," I was introduced forthwith into the presence of an elderly female, furnished with one of the most forbidding visages that it has ever been my lot to encounter. Nothing daunted, however, at her "vinegar aspect," I proceeded at once to unfold the "nature of my business," which was, as my readers will doubtless have anticipated, neither more nor less than "to restore to the *elder* of the two ladies I had the honour of escorting from the play-house, the evening before, a vinaigrette, which I had unwittingly retained after its use was rendered superfluous by the recovery of *her daughter* from the terror she had experienced, and to express my fervent hopes that her alarm had been attended by no unpleasant consequences."

Whether it was that the old snap-dragon suspected my veracity from the expression of my tell-tale countenance, I knew not; though I think it far from improbable, as I never in my life could acquire from my Cousin Nicholas that happy nonchalance with which he would utter you half a dozen lies in a breath, without the slightest embarrassment or discomposure of muscle: certain it is, that my tormenting auditress soon convinced me that it would be easier to extract a guinea from a miser's purse, or a plain answer from a diplomatist's portfeuille, than to obtain from her the information I so eagerly panted to obtain.

With an excess of good-breeding, ludicrously at variance with the sourness of her physiognomy, she eluded my request to be admitted to see the lady, parried all my inquiries, thanked me for my civility, and, requesting me to give myself no farther trouble about the trinket (which she pledged herself to return to the right owner at an early opportunity), fairly bowed and curtsied me out of the house, without my having been able to arrive at any other certainty than that I had thrown away five pounds

ten shillings upon a most unprofitable speculation, and one which presented not the shadow of a return; in short, the cool sarcastic demeanour of that terrible old woman fully convinced me that, from the very first, she had penetrated my motives, seen through my stratagem, and made my whole scheme recoil upon myself. One advantage, however, I had at least gained by my attempt; that was the securing still farther the assistance of my friendly Abigail, to whom I made the most magnificent promises on the simple condition that she should transmit the desired intelligence to an address with which I furnished her; and, with nothing beyond this frail foundation to rest my hopes upon, I at last quitted London, leaving Nicholas behind me, and fully resolving to extricate myself as soon as possible from any engagement which my mother might have formed for me, that I might return to the metropolis, where only I had any hope of succeeding in my search after the, perhaps unconscious, possessor of my runaway heart.

CHAPTER VII.

Jog on, jog on the footpath-way,
And merrily gain the stile-a!
Your merry heart goes all the day,
Your sad tires in a mile-a.

AUTOLYCUS.

THE WAY-WORN TRAVELLER.—THE MYSTERY DEVELOPED.—GOOD INTENTIONS.—A HINT AND AN INVITATION.—NOUS VERRONS.

THE evening of a cold, wet, and dreary day in the month of March saw me once more at Underdown Hall, as gloomy, uncomfortable, and thoroughly out of temper as any dutiful young gentleman in the world could possibly be when thwarted in his pursuits by the untimely interposition of his mamma. The genuine joy, however, expressed by my dear mother at my arrival, and the cordial greetings of Sir Oliver, soon alleviated, if they failed to

dissipate entirely, my chagrin. I say nothing of the friendly shake of the hand vouchsafed me by the taciturn captain, or the simpering congratulations of Miss Pyefinch, who remarked, in the most flattering manner, that "Master Stafford" (I was nearly twenty-two, and measured five feet eleven in my stockings) "has grown surprisingly, and is very much improved altogether since I saw him last."

I found the worthy baronet as stout, as jovial, and as proud of his ancestry as ever; time, indeed, had laid a lenient hand on him, and, but that his hair had begun to assume the tint of the badger rather than that of the raven, little difference was to be observed in his appearance, from that which he had exhibited at the time when I had first been presented to his notice. Not so Mrs. Stafford; her health had never been good since my father's death, and it was with pain I now remarked that she looked much thinner, and was evidently much weaker, than when I had last quitted her; but her spirits were still good, much better indeed than I had long been accustomed to see them, and her eye gleamed once more, occasionally, with a portion of that playful fire which during the lifetime of her husband had marked its scintillations.

She was evidently much pleased at something; but what that something was which afforded her so much apparent satisfaction, remained a mystery not to be solved till the following morning. I therefore repressed my curiosity as I best might, and retired to my couch, in the ardent hope of being visited in my dreams by enchanting visions of my fair but unknown enslaver. Sir Oliver had forced on me certain rations of cold pork for supper. I fell asleep, and dreamt of the devil and Mrs. Morgan.

At length

> "The morn, in russet mantle clad,
> Peep'd o'er the top of" our "high eastern hill."

After a breakfast which appeared to me to be unusually protracted, I retired with my mother to her dressing-room, there to receive from her a communication of those weighty motives which had induced her to summon me

thus abruptly. I learned that her so doing was the consequence of a letter which she had lately received from a paternal uncle of mine, of whom I had hitherto heard but little, and seen nothing, General Lord Viscount Manningham, the elder, and now the sole surviving brother of my lamented father.

This epistle stated the fact of his lordship's arrival in England, after an absence from his native land of many years' duration, in the course of which time his paternal affections had been severely lacerated, by witnessing a fine and dearly-loved family of promising children yielding, together with their mother, one by one, to the fatal effects of a climate but too uncongenial with a European constitution. Of three boys, and as many girls, one only of the latter now remained to him; and, trembling lest the same dreadful cause which had robbed him in succession of her brothers and sisters should also deprive him of this, now become his only hope, Lord Manningham had relinquished the high and lucrative situation, and the state, little short of regal, which he held in one of our richest colonies, to seek once more the shores of his own country, loaded, 'tis true, with wealth, but all too dearly purchased by the loss of his wife and offspring.

Great indeed were the changes which the gallant viscount found had taken place during his long absence from England. His two brothers were, both of them, no more; of all his once numerous relatives and connections my mother and myself were the solitary survivors, neither of whom he had, of course, ever beheld. His attachment to his brothers, and to Charles especially, had been a strong one; and although the confined state of his own finances, which in the earlier part of his career were altogether unequal to the decent support of his rank, had prevented his doing for him what his affection dictated, and indeed forced him to sacrifice all his early habits and attachments for the valuable appointment which eventually crowned him with wealth as well as honour, still he ever entertained the kindliest feelings towards his youngest brother, and, as far as lay in his power, had aided his promotion by the exercise of all the interest he possessed; fully

determining, at the same time, to appropriate to his use no niggard portion of that daily increasing property which the gradual contraction of his own family circle rendered the less necessary for his and their exclusive use.

Death, as we have already seen, had frustrated this project; and Colonel Stafford expired, comparatively ignorant of his fraternal intentions; but now that the same cruel spoiler had robbed him also of those beloved boys to whom he had once looked up as destined to transmit his name and honours to posterity, Lord Manningham recurred with greater warmth than ever to his original design; and, as the father was beyond the reach of his benevolence, resolved to confer his benefits on the son. In this intention he was the more confirmed, as that son was now, by the failure of his own issue-male, become heir-presumptive to the family title, and the last possessor of the noble name of Stafford.

Such was the tenor of his epistle, which concluded with the expression of an earnest desire to see him who was destined to inherit his honours, and intimated that the character he had already heard of his nephew,—my mother read me this part of the letter with a swelling heart,—in reply to the inquiries which he had instituted respecting him, made him anxious that the meeting should take place as soon as possible.

The letter, which, I need hardly say, was a very long one, and couched in the handsomest and most affectionate terms, contained also a pressing invitation to my mother, urging her to accompany her son to Grosvenor Square, as his engagements with ministers would, for a time, render it impossible for the ex-governor himself to visit the Hall; a hint, too, was conveyed of an embryo plan, the object of which was the union of the senior and junior branches of the house of Stafford, by the marriage of the two last remaining scions of the family.

Of all the proposals that could have been submitted to her, it is doubtful if any one could have been recommended of a nature more gratifying to my mother than the one thus alluded to. Lord Manningham's wealth was now immense, and, being almost entirely of his own

acquisition, was, of course, with the exception of the very small entailed estate which went with the viscountcy, completely at his own disposal. To me, indeed, a barren title would descend; but that, without the funds necessary to support its dignity, might rather be considered as a misfortune than a boon. An arrangement like the one proposed would obviate every inconvenience. Report spoke highly of the person and accomplishments of the Honourable Miss Stafford, although (from her father's time having been hitherto too much occupied since his return to admit of his forming a suitable establishment) she had not yet been introduced into general society, but at the next birthday she was to be presented; then, of course, her career of fashion would commence, and, beyond all doubt, numberless admirers among the votaries of *ton* would rapidly present themselves in the train of the possessor of so many charms, and the inheritrix of so many rupees. On every account, therefore, my mother was anxious that I should lose no time in securing to myself an interest both with my noble uncle and his fair daughter; and nothing prevented her from at once writing to me, and explaining the whole affair, but the idea which she entertained that she could better expatiate upon the advantages of such a match in a personal interview, combined with a wish of hearing from my own lips the pleasing assurance that my most earnest endeavours should be forthwith applied to the realization of this her most fondly-cherished hope.

Although naturally of a sanguine temperament, and fully alive to all the advantages which rank and property bestow on their possessor, there was nevertheless a something in all this which did not present itself to my view in quite such glowing colours as it did to that of my mother. To be thus unceremoniously disposed of, without being even consulted on the subject, appeared to me neither consistent with the respect I thought my due, nor altogether reasonable. Miss Stafford might, for aught I knew to the contrary, be all that my mother represented her to be; but then again—she might *not*—or, if she were, I might not like her, or—though self-love

whispered that was scarcely possible—she *might* not like me. Nor should I be acting with candour were I to deny that, had this proposal been made to me before I quitted Oxford, it *might* have been viewed in a very different light. At present the charms of the unknown fair one certainly tended most materially to bias my inclinations; and though I was not so far gone, either in love or in romance, as at once to resolve on rejecting so fair an offer,—if offer that might be called which at most was only an insinuation,—still the recollection of the tender yet modest glances I had encountered in the pit of Covent Garden theatre undoubtedly contributed to render me averse from a proposal, my acceptance of which would of course preclude the possibility of any further acquaintance with the object of my search, even should I be fortunate enough to discover her retreat. Nevertheless, I could not help feeling the force of Sir Anthony Absolute's observation, "it is very unreasonable to object to a lady whom you have never seen;" and the idea at the same moment occurring to me that my attendance on Lord Manningham in town would be, perhaps, the most efficacious method I could take to make the discovery that lay so near my heart, I gave my assent to the proposal that I should pay my uncle a visit, not only without reluctance, but even with an alacrity, to which an unwillingness to occasion so much pain to my mother as I saw the expression of my real feelings on the subject would give her, mainly contributed.

A sort of coxcombical feeling, that perhaps, after all, I *might* like a young lady—who, it was ten to one, might not like me, aided in deciding the matter, and I "gave in my adhesion" with a tolerably decent share of apparent resignation. My mother, however, was not so blind as to be insensible to my indifference on a subject which she had fondly flattered herself would have elicited far more vivid emotions; still, as I expressed no disinclination to the measure, remonstrance was impossible, and she contented herself with re-stating, in the most persuasive language of which she was mistress, the various and incalculable advantages attending the connection. Her

endeavours were not wholly unsuccessful; and after a day principally spent in reflection upon all the *pros* and *cons* of the business, I went to repose with a resolution of confirming my willingness to avail myself immediately of his lordship's invitation, trusting to Providence and to events as they might arise, to enable me either to accept or decline the honour intended me. This I signified to my mother before I retired for the night, in such terms as again caused the beam of satisfaction and joy to sparkle in her eye. On the following day I again pursued my way towards that great emporium of the wealth of the Universe, which, as I firmly believed, contained, among its other treasures, the paragon of her sex.—Remember, reader, I was then not twenty-two.

The weather on this occasion was still more boisterous and unpleasant than on the day of my journey into the country, but I neither marked its state nor felt the inconvenience of it. The road, the prospects, the very post-boys were all charming; and, but that they were rather slow, the horses themselves would have had the benefit of that complacency with which I was now disposed to regard all nature, animate and inanimate—except Mrs. Morgan.

My mother had provided me with an introductory letter to Lord Manningham, expressing the satisfaction she had experienced at finding the sole surviving brother of her lamented Charles thus disposed to countenance and support his widow and only child, while she deeply regretted that the state of her own health was such as to render so long a journey imprudent, not to say impossible, on her part. Of me, her son, she spoke in the fondest terms maternal affection could dictate, and conjured him, by the love which, as his letter evinced, he had borne the father, to extend that love to the son. She added her eager coincidence in his half-expressed wish, and her anxious hope that his lordship would pay her a visit, at Underdown Hall, at the earliest opportunity which his engagements would afford him.

A civil postscript from Sir Oliver, backing the latter request, completed this momentous despatch, which was

delivered into my safe keeping, sealed, in due form, with a fine impression of the Bullwinkle arms, affixed by the baronet himself, in a circle of sealing-wax the size of a crown-piece.

CHAPTER VIII.

Assist me, chaste Dian, the nymph to regain,
More fleet than the roebuck, and wing'd with disdain;
The faster I follow, the faster she flies;
Though Daphne's pursued, 'tis Myrtillo that dies.
Ductto Affettuoso.

NO NEWS NOT ALWAYS GOOD NEWS.—TWO HEADS NOT ALWAYS BETTER THAN ONE.—A SEARCH.—A DISAPPOINTMENT.—OFF SHE GOES.—TALLY-HO!—A CHASE.—A DOUBLE.—FAIRLY THROWN OUT.

It was late in the afternoon when I reached London; but no sooner had I deposited my baggage safely in my old quarters, than I ran, without even changing my dress, or taking any refreshment, to Jermyn Street.

My old friend Sally opened the door as usual; but her countenance at once told me that she had nothing to communicate. "Neither of the ladies had called since I was there last," and of course she had as yet had no opportunity of earning the stipulated reward; but "she did not despair."—Nor did I, though I could not help feeling sorely disappointed.

Foiled once more, I returned to the hotel, and, having seated myself in the coffee-room, was slowly pulling to pieces and devouring the solitary muffin that accompanied my cup of coffee, with all the vacant deliberation of mental as well as corporeal lassitude, when a sudden slap on the shoulder induced me to raise my eyes, which immediately encountered an oblique glance from those of my Cousin Nicholas.

I know not whether I have before remarked that my young relative, among his other accomplishments, pos-

sessed that of squinting in its most perfect fashion ;—looking me, therefore, full in the face, while an ordinary observer would have believed one of his eyes to be directed to the opposite side of the room, and its fellow to the muffineer in my hand—

"Charles!" quoth he, "is it possible?—I thought you had long ere this been at Underdown! What!—been snug in town all the while?—eh, old Sobersides?—Ferreting out some wench for a hundred!—The little gipsy we picked up at the playhouse, eh?"

A very respectable portion of the best blood in my veins rushed into my face, as I indignantly repelled this injurious supposition, assuring my cousin, in tones of greater asperity than usual, that, so far from having been lying *perdu* in London, or engaged in any unworthy pursuit, I had actually been down to his father's, and was indeed but just returned to town.

"Well, well, no great harm done, Cousin Charles,—had my guess been a true one, you might, perhaps, have been worse employed.—But how goes it with old Squaretoes, and that dainty piece of dimity, Miss Kitty Pyefinch?—Curse her nankeen countenance! I thought she would have kissed me when I left home, whether I would or not."

"Nicholas," said I, "Sir Oliver is as well as I have ever known him to be, together with all his friends, disrespectfully as you may choose to allude to some of them ;—but come, let me question you in my turn :—have you found out—that is—have you ever met again with those ladies whom we saw that evening at the Oratorio, and followed to Jermyn Street?"

"Not I—that is—not to speak to them. I fell in with the young tit indeed yesterday, walking with her bumpkin brother, but I cut them dead. Miss is too die-away for me. The old girl would be a better speculation by half, if she were not so deuced crummy."

"But where, my dear Nicholas—where did you meet with that charming—I mean the girl you speak of?"

"Oh, in the Strand, yesterday morning; and I dare say she visits some people in that elegant neighbourhood,

for I saw her go into a house in one of the streets leading from it down towards the river."

"Which street, my dear Nicholas?"

"No, not Wych Street; one of those on the other side of the way;—I do not know that I can tell you the name of it; but, as you seem so anxious about the business, I dare say I could point it out to you,—and the house too, for that matter,—to-morrow."

"Anxious?—no, not at all!—But, seriously, my good fellow, you will lay me under an essential obligation if you can show me the house, as the lady left something in my possession that evening, which, as a gentleman, I of course wish to return."

"Why not go to her own house, then, at once, where we saw her go in with her mother and Master Sappy, after the music?"

"Why, to tell you the truth, Nicholas, I have already called there, and find that is not her residence, but merely the abode of one of her friends."

"Well, Cousin Charles, I will help you as far as I can, with all my heart. But why so close, man? Why not say at once that you have taken a fancy to the girl, and want to beat up her quarters?"

It was with no small difficulty that I could command my temper sufficiently to listen to my cousin's sarcastic innuendos, which, through the fear of losing what information he might be able to give me, I dared not openly resent. He saw his power, and used it most unmercifully, tantalizing and tormenting me all the evening, in the course of which he managed to draw from me the reasons of my so sudden return to town, and my intended intercourse with Lord Manningham's family. At length he quitted me for the night, with a promise of accompanying me early the next morning in pursuit of my lovely fugitive, leaving me, however, still half in doubt whether he had not been all along playing upon my credulity, and whether the whole story of the rencontre in the Strand was not a pure fiction of his own inventing.

Never did night appear so long as that which intervened between this evening of my return and the following

morning, which, as I fondly hoped, was destined to crown my wishes with success. I sprang from my bed as soon as the various sounds from below gave notice that the business of the day was commencing ; and, having roused my Cousin Nicholas, who slept in an adjoining chamber, made a hasty toilet, and wandered up and down the empty coffee-room till he should join me at breakfast, which I ordered immediately, in anticipation of his instant appearance.

Twenty times had I compared the watch in my hand with the dial in the room,—twenty times had I turned with eagerness to the door, through which Nicholas did *not* enter,—and full as often had I taken up and laid down again the *Morning Herald*, of which I found it impossible at present to read six consecutive lines. Still he came not.

At last, losing all patience, I once more flew up the stairs that led to his chamber, with strides that would not have disgraced an ogre. I burst into his room, and found him—fast asleep, as he was when I had called him an hour and twelve minutes before. Human nature could not endure this ; so, turning down the bed-clothes, and laying violent hands upon the ewer, I threatened him with a discipline similar to that inflicted on the unlucky pickpocket, unless he immediately took the necessary measures for accompanying me downstairs. This Mr. Bullwinkle once more solemnly promised to do ; but I was no longer in that state of patient acquiescence which would have enabled me to rest satisfied with his plighted faith. I therefore stationed myself obstinately by his bedside till the great work of adorning and embellishing his person was completed,—an operation which I could not at times help suspecting he took a malicious pleasure in protracting to the latest possible period.

In spite of all his delays, necessary and unnecessary, my Cousin Nicholas was at length accoutred ; and after breakfast, which he seemed to me to be an age in devouring, we started off, arm-in-arm together, towards the Strand. But here the demon of disappointment still pursued me : Nicholas either could not, or would not, point out the

precise street in which he had seen the object of my search; and after leading me in vain up and down every street and lane between Temple Bar and Charing Cross, provokingly asserting as he entered each, that he "was sure he was right at last,"—a prediction the fallacy of which was proved the succeeding moment,—he at length fairly confessed that "his recollection had certainly failed him for once, and that he really could not now tell which was the identical street in question, though he was perfectly sure it must be one of them."

"Hope deferred," saith the wise man, "maketh the heart sick;" and, completely overcome with that uncomfortable sensation, I made but little resistance to the proposal he now made, that we should adjourn for a while to the nearest coffee-house and recruit. Many of my readers will recollect one, of a third-rate description, called the Hungerford, long since swept from the face of the earth by the innovating hand of time, but which, at the period of which I am speaking, stood on the north side of the Strand, and nearly faced the market of the same name, which still exists, and retains its appellation: *sed quantum mutatus ab illo!* Into this asylum did I betake myself, weary and dispirited both in mind and body, and seated myself opposite to my companion in one of the boxes near the window.

My Cousin Nicholas called for a "basin of mock-turtle," and I was persuaded to order another, rather with the view of keeping him in countenance (though I must confess I do not recollect having ever seen him *out* of countenance), and of whiling away the time till his satiated appetite should enable him to renew the search, than from any inclination on my part to eat. The "*two mocks* for number three" were at length despatched, and I was settling with the slipshod waiter who had brought them, —for my cousin, as usual, had no silver,—when an exclamation from the latter at once took away all my attention.

"There she goes, by G——!" said Nicholas.

"Who?—where?" cried I, turning instantly to the window, and throwing the waiter, who had just delivered

me the change for a five-pound note, twice as much as he demanded. "As I live and breathe," quoth Nicholas, "she is in that green chariot yonder;" and as he spoke he made for the door.

I gave but one look down the street, saw a showy-looking equipage proceeding at a brisk pace, and instantly turning, scarce gave myself time to thrust the "flimsies," as Nicholas called the one-pound notes, into my pocket-book that lay on the table, ere I sprang after him. My cousin was already in the street.

With a degree of rapidity worthy of notice in the annals of pedestrianism, we made our way along that crowded thoroughfare. The "green chariot" was still in view, and we were fast gaining upon it, when, in crossing what was then the end of St. Martin's Lane, I experienced the truth of that homely but respectable proverb, "The more haste, the less speed:" I stumbled and fell. It was but the delay of a moment; I was instantly on my legs again, and followed the direction which my cousin declared the chariot had taken; but it was no longer in sight, and we had reached the Opera-house, in breathless precipitation, ere my companion stopped short and observed, "he was afraid he must have been mistaken after all, and that the carriage had turned down towards Parliament Street."

It was but too true;—we had, indeed, in the sportsman's phrase, "overridden the hounds;" and I was cursing the ill-luck that seemed to delight in persecuting me, when a transient glimpse of Nicholas's face for the first time induced a suspicion of his sincerity. There was in the expression of his countenance a something which conveyed at once to my mind a strong idea that he had purposely misled me, though wherefore it was impossible for me to conjecture.

"Bullwinkle!" said I, stopping short and fixing my eyes upon him, "you are deceiving me. They came not this way, and you know it——"

"Upon my life, I fear so," returned he in an unembarrassed tone, while his villanous obliquity of vision defied the inquisitorial glance I endeavoured to fix upon his eyes; "I really think we must be wrong," he continued;

"but no matter: a girl like her is easily unkennelled, if a man sets about the search in earnest. Come, come, Stafford, give up the chase for to-day, man. You have plenty of time before you; and a few of the *mopusses*, properly administered, will soon ferret her out, I warrant you; or, at all events, they will find you another as good. I should like nothing better than to stay and lend you a helping hand, for this sort of adventure is rather in my way; but

> 'Stern Necessity's severe decree
> No more permits the willing choice to me!'

as Kitty Pyefinch says. I must be off to Oxford again to-morrow, for I have been *ill* there so long, that, by Jove, they may take it into their infernally compassionate heads to look in and see whether I am alive or not. So, come, a dish of fish, a cutlet, and one bottle of Burgundy to wash it down, and then I leave you to discover and arrange matters, if you can, with this invisible insensible whom you have never seen but once, and prosecute your embryo amour with the delectable cousin whom you have never seen at all. For me, I am off once more *inter sylvas academi quærere verum.*"

His open, unembarrassed manner staggered, if it did not entirely remove, my suspicions. I was already fatigued with walking the whole of the day, and accompanied him, therefore, the more readily to the Bedford, resolving to renew my search the next morning, and to leave no stone unturned to accomplish a discovery which, the more that obstacles were thrown in its way, I seemed the more eagerly to desire.

CHAPTER IX.

If I be I, as I suppose I be,
I've got a little dog at home, and he knows me :
If I be I, he will wag his little tail,
But if I be not I, he will then bark and rail.
LITTLE WOMAN.

MORE MYSTERY.—AN ARRIVAL.—AN AGREEABLE RENCONTRE.—ANOTHER NOT SO AGREEABLE.—SEEING IS NOT ALWAYS BELIEVING.—A "ROW."—WESTWARD HO!—LONG LOOKED FOR, FOUND AT LAST.

ON rising the following morning, I found that Nicholas had for once kept faith : he had already started for Oxford, nor was I at all sorry for the circumstance. Indeed, I could not fail to call to mind the notorious propensity to mischief which he had displayed from a boy—a propensity which, instead of wearing out and disappearing as he advanced in years, had, as I well knew,

"Grown with his growth, and strengthen'd with his strength."

The more I considered his conduct during the preceding day, the more I became convinced that I had been his dupe throughout ; and that at the very moment when he seemed to be most earnest in assisting my inquiries, he was in reality laughing at me in his sleeve, and enjoying my perplexity and disappointment. His absence, therefore, I felt as a positive relief, rather than as an inconvenience ; and I accordingly prepared to renew my researches by myself, deriving added confidence from the want of that very auxiliary on whom I had, only the day before, placed so much dependence. But before I again set out on my Quixotic expedition, busy memory interfered most officiously, and brought to my view, in very prominent colours, the ostensible purpose for which I had returned to London—the plighted promise I had given to my mother, that I would forthwith seek out my noble uncle and his fair daughter.

Mrs. Stafford would, I knew, be exceedingly anxious to hear of my arrival and domestication in Lord Manningham's family. One day's delay might, fairly enough, be attributed to fatigue, &c.; but a second would hardly admit of such, or indeed of any, excuse. I, therefore, though not without a feeling of reluctance almost amounting to aversion, determined to go and present my letter of introduction to the "Honourable Amelia Stafford," and her lordly papa. But here I soon found I was reckoning without my host;—the epistle so carefully indited by my mother, so much more carefully sealed and superscribed by Sir Oliver, and most carefully, as I imagined, deposited by myself within the voluminous folds of a patent pocket-book—was nowhere to be found.

In vain did I ransack the contents of the aforesaid pocket-book, in which I could have ventured to swear I had placed it with my own hand, and whence nothing but the fact of the book's never having been for one moment out of my possession since my departure from Underdown could prevent my believing it to have been abstracted. In vain did I, as it were, eviscerate every fold and every pocket—the letter had totally disappeared.

After a long-continued but fruitless search, I was endeavouring to recollect whether I might not, after all, in the hurry of my return, have left this fateful billet on my dressing-table at the hall, when the conviction at once struck me that I had, immediately on receiving it from my mother, placed it directly in my pocket-book, together with two others, one from Sir Oliver to his man of business, and one from Miss Kitty Pyefinch,—"favoured by C. Stafford, Esq."—to a milliner in Barbican, with whom she had some time before scraped an acquaintance at a watering-place, and had since regularly corresponded, once at least in every year, on the subject of the newest fashions. This last-named and most precious charge I had, immediately on my arrival in London, consigned to the vortex of the twopenny-post, and now I began to tremble, lest, inadvertently, I might have committed the missing epistle to the same receptacle; but this, I soon perceived, could not have been the case, as, on a re-exami-

nation, I not only found my uncle's letter to his agent, but also another in the closest juxta-position to it, evidently usurping the place of the deficient billet. This was a supernumerary of which I had no recollection, and was addressed to "James Arbuthnot, Esq., British Coffee-house, Cockspur Street."

Who on earth Mr. James Arbuthnot could possibly be, or how a letter directed to him could find its way into my pocket, was to me as absolute a mystery as the quadrature of the circle, the determination of the longitude, or the discovery of the philosopher's stone. There, however, it was,—and, as the seal was already broken, I felt little compunction in intruding upon the privacy of a gentleman who had some how or other contrived, most unwittingly on my side, to make me a party to his correspondence.

The contents of the letter were as follow :—

"Sir,—I vas to meet you at de Tennis Court on Vensday, as you tell me, about that leetle annuity, bote you vas not come. The business can't be done all so cheap as vat I thought; bote if the gentlemans vas abofe seventy, den I can get my frend to do de *post obit* at twenty-six.—Yours most obediently,

"Aaron Ximenes.

"P.S.—The premiums will only be six and a half."

Never did response, written or unwritten, from the Pythian Tripod, or any other oracle of antiquity, exercise the wits of curious inquirer more than did this mystic scroll puzzle and perplex my wondering faculties. Difficult as it was to decipher the heiroglyphics themselves, their purport, and, above all, the mode in which they could have insinuated themselves into their present situation, was still more mysterious. The more I racked my brain to account for it, the more bewildered I became. One thing, however, was certain, and, when I came to reflect more coolly upon the matter, I was not altogether sorry for it,—the letter to Lord Manningham was undoubtedly lost, and I therefore hesitated not to avail

myself of this circumstance to defer my visit to Grosvenor Square, contenting myself with writing to my mother, informing her of the occurrence, and requesting that she would cause my room at the Hall to be examined for the missing epistle, and that, in the event of its not being forthcoming, she would furnish me with a new set of credentials. The time which must necessarily intervene I determined to employ in a renewed and energetic pursuit after my *incognita*.

I did not in the mean time forget to make inquiries in Cockspur Street after "James Arbuthnot, Esq." A gentleman of that name had, as I was told, occasionally slept there, and letters were sometimes left at the bar for him; but he had not been there lately, nor did they recollect that any letter whatever had been taken in for him for some time. With this information, meagre and unsatisfactory as it was, I was obliged for the present to remain contented. My mornings were passed in parading the streets, my evenings in visiting various places of amusement, in the vain hope of once more encountering the idol of my imagination. The day passed by on which I might have received an answer from my mother; but it came not, and I rejoiced in the delay. On the fifth evening, I was sitting, as usual, after a long and useless peregrination, execrating my unlucky stars, and revolving a thousand plans, each more visionary than the last, for the attainment of my object, when Sir Oliver Bullwinkle, in his own proper person, entered the coffee-room.

Had the spectre of the revered Sir Roger risen from the superincumbent dust of ages, in all his Norman panoply, and presented himself before me, refulgent in chain mail, I could scarcely have received the visitation with a more theatric start.

That any circumstance at all short of an earthquake, or the stoppage of a country bank, could have possessed sufficient interest to draw the good baronet thirty miles from home, I could never have conceived; but to the metropolis!—to that scene of villany, fraud, and ignorance!—ay, of ignorance, for "what can people know, that is worth knowing, who never go a-hunting above once a year, and

then only on an Easter Tuesday in a hackney-coach!" This had frequently formed a favourite theme of discourse for my uncle on a winter's evening, at Underdown Hall, especially after the news contained in some recent missive from Miss Kitty's city correspondent had been duly detailed and commented upon by that erudite fair. Much then did I marvel at seeing the baronet, despite the sovereign contempt he ever felt and expressed for them, thus mixing with the "ignoramuses" of London; and not a little did I speculate upon the magnitude of that cause which could operate to the voluntary introduction of his person among so barbarous a race.

But the half-ironical smile which had begun to contract the corners of my mouth expanded at once into an expression of the most unfeigned gratitude, when I found that the moral convulsion which had divorced the kind soul from his household gods, and plunged him thus headlong into scenes which he abominated, was neither more nor less than the anxiety which he felt for the welfare of my unworthy self. The receipt of my letter had caused much consternation at the Hall; that from my mother to Lord Manningham could nowhere be found in the places which I had desired might be searched; and my affectionate parent had determined, after a long and fruitless inquiry on the subject, on recommencing her task, when, to the utter surprise of herself and everybody else, Sir Oliver suddenly announced his resolution of being the bearer of it.

"The boy," he said, "was clearly not able to make his way in town like a man—every one might have seen, too, when he was last down at the Hall, that his wits were *gone wool-gathering*—and he would go and see him well through the business himself." It is needless to say that his offer was accepted with the liveliest gratitude by a mother anxious for the well-being of her child, though more than a doubt would sometimes cross her mind, if her brother's personal interference could, in the present case at least, contribute to it; but the good-humoured eagerness to be of service to me which he displayed, and the vehement invectives he launched forth against the villany

and temptations of London in the abstract (of which in the detail he had about as much knowledge and experience as a child of four years old, or a native of Timbuctoo), made Mrs. Stafford contented, nay, even anxious that he should set out forthwith to cover me with his protecting ægis, and ward off the dangers with which the loss of so valuable an article as a letter of introduction declared me necessarily to be surrounded. My poor uncle was about as well fitted for the task of guiding a youth through the labyrinthian ways of London, as of being Mufti to the Sublime Porte ; but he thought otherwise, and his motives were the kindliest and most affectionate. Peace be with his ashes!

With much circumlocution, and an air of fatherly protection,—to me, who knew the worthy baronet's habits so well, irresistibly ludicrous,—he communicated his intentions in coming to London, and, felicitating both me and himself most warmly on his having so readily met with me, expressed his determination of taking a quiet pipe and a tankard, as he had dined upon the road, and of postponing matters of business until the morrow.

There was much, however, in this arrangement of Sir Oliver's objectionable, not to say impracticable. In the first place, not even a cigar (to say nothing of tobacco-pipes) was allowed in the room, nor was "a tankard" much more accessible ; besides, the social "dish of chat" with me, which he seemed to consider an appendage of course, would have interfered very materially with the plan I had already chalked out for the evening. Notwithstanding my numerous disappointments, hope had not yet entirely forsaken me ; and I had fully resolved on visiting one, at least, of the theatres, as usual, in the faint expectation of being able to recover among the audience some traces of the beautiful phantom which had hitherto eluded me. I had nothing for it, therefore, but to state plainly to Sir Oliver the impossibility of his gratifying himself at present in the manner proposed, and to solicit his joining me in a cup of coffee, and subsequent adjournment to Drury Lane ; after which I pledged myself to accompany him to a place where, amidst less sophisticated

souls, he might solace himself to satiety with his favourite beverage and amusement. With much the same sort of surly acquiescence as that with which a traveller surrenders to a footpad the purse he had no means of withholding, Sir Oliver, finding me positive, gave a grumbling assent, and to Drury Lane we proceeded.

Many years had elapsed since the baronet had visited the interior of a London theatre, and the brilliancy of the lights, the elegance of the house, the beauty of the scenery and decorations, together with the business of the stage, had an effect almost bewildering upon his faculties. Mine, too, were scarcely more at liberty, since, in hearing and replying to his various remarks and multifarious questions, my own senses were so completely occupied as to leave a person less interested than myself little leisure or opportunity for the scrutiny which was my real inducement to attend the performance. By degrees, indeed, in listening to and answering Sir Oliver's very *original* observations, the main purpose of my coming had almost faded from my memory, when it was at once most forcibly brought to my recollection by an apparition in an opposite box, which acted upon me with the effect of a galvanic battery. This was the gaunt figure of the ever-to-be-abominated Mrs. Morgan, seated in close confabulation with the supposed mamma of my unknown charmer, in a front row on the second tier.

Not a little to the astonishment, and the very visible dismay, of Sir Oliver, I cut him hastily short in an elaborate harangue on the wonderful properties of gas, and the ingenuity of its, then recent, introduction into our national theatres, and briefly telling him that I had just caught sight of a college-acquaintance, in an opposite box, whom I particularly wished to speak to, begged his excuse for a few minutes, while I should make to my friend a communication of some consequence; then, pledging myself to rejoin him in a quarter of an hour at farthest, I gave him no time to utter the objection I saw already hovering on his lips, but bowed and left him, running, with all the eagerness of a boy after a butterfly, towards the place which contained the object of my pursuit.

Never did weary palmer, after a long and laborious pilgrimage, enter the shrine of his patron saint with more of satisfaction, awe, and reverence, than filled my palpitating bosom as I seated myself behind Mrs. Morgan and her friend. A significant glance passed between them as I entered, and, with a voice faltering from emotion, paid my compliments to both. My reception from either party was sufficiently cool to have rebuffed any one who had less imperious motives for cultivating an acquaintance. Their replies to my remarks, and congratulations upon their good looks, were cold, constrained, and barely within the bounds of civility; while the sarcastic expression of Mrs. Morgan's eye, when I at last hazarded an inquiry to her companion after the health of "the young lady whom I once had the happiness of seeing in her company," showed me at once that the motives of my attentions were, by her at least, duly appreciated.

I failed not also to perceive that this question put the good lady to whom it was addressed into no small flutter; she fumed and fidgeted, and appeared so uneasy during every allusion I made to the subject of our former meeting, and evaded giving me any direct answer so very inartificially, that I no longer imagined, what I had never indeed entirely believed, that any maternal ties, at all events, existed between her and my charmer; I felt convinced, on the contrary, that a secret of some kind or other, and evidently one very burdensome in the keeping, prevented her from giving me all the information I required. I employed all the address I was master of to overcome their undisguised dislike to my society, and by my perseverance had at length so far succeeded in thawing the ice, even of the frosty-faced Morgan, as to induce her to reply to my remarks in a tone which might almost have been considered as approaching to civility; I had begun to flatter myself that I should obtain by sap what had defied my efforts at storming—I had actually gained so much as to discover that the name of my friend on the left hand was Wilkinson, and that she filled the important situation of housekeeper in a family of rank at the "West End of the Town"—when a bustle in the box which I

had quitted forcibly drew off my attention. A momentary glance was sufficient to satisfy me that the principal actor in the disturbance was Sir Oliver Bullwinkle.

That he was engaged in a serious dispute with some one, the vehemence of the good baronet's gesticulation would not allow me to doubt, while now and then an upper note of his, audible in preponderating shrillness, above all the forcible recommendations to "Turn 'em out!" and "Throw 'em over!"—generally applied on such occasions by the denizens of the upper regions, in the forlorn hope of transferring objects of annoyance from themselves to their friends below,—confirmed the fact. The person of the antagonist, who appeared to have drawn down upon himself such a torrent of wrath and vituperation from the exasperated baronet, was concealed from my view by the intervening bystanders, some of whom seemed, by their gestures, inclined to take an active part in the fray. Every feeling of my mind naturally revolted against seeing my uncle, although, as I knew, "himself a host," thus matched single-handed against such apparently fearful odds, and I hastened to his assistance, first apologizing to my new friends for my abruptness in quitting them, and begging permission to return and escort them home at the conclusion of the performance.

Whether my very polite offer met with acceptance or denial, I am unable to say, as at that moment I fancied I saw Sir Oliver's arm raised in the act of striking, and, without waiting to distinguish the answer, I closed the box-door, and ran off.

On arriving at the supposed scene of combat, I found I was just too late for the fray: my uncle's opponent, having been carried off by a friend just as the dispute had reached its climax, was already descending one of the staircases that led to the lobbies. I saw nothing of his person, save that a casual glance showed me a figure wrapped up in a light-coloured riding-coat, while some broken exclamations, uttered either by himself or his companion, respecting the "old fellow's infernal impudence," were alone distinguishable.

A considerable degree of confusion still prevailed within the box, and, as Sir Oliver's safety was my first object, to that point I of course directed my attention. I found the baronet, with a face as red a peony, fuming and perspiring at every pore, while, with all the vehemence of a Methodist preacher at a country wake, he was alternately remonstrating and insisting on his right to chastise some one who appeared to have incurred the heaviest weight of his displeasure, and this to the great amusement of a portion of his audience, and the marked indignation of others. As his eye fell upon me, he changed the object of his attack.

"So, sir, here you are at last! This is your ten minutes, is it? Why were you not here, sir, to have broken that puppy's neck?"

"Be calm, my dear Sir Oliver, let me beg you to be calm; consider where you are, and——"

"Consider the d—l, sir. Calm! I will never be calm again. I have a right to be in a passion, and I will. Abuse me like a pickpocket!—threaten to pull my nose!—a Bullwinkle's nose!—I'll massacre the rascal, I'll——"

"My dear uncle, pray let me persuade you to withdraw; your antagonist is gone already: in a fitter place we can talk this matter over, and if any one has insulted you——"

"Insulted me!—didn't I tell you he swore he would pull my nose?—threatened to horsewhip me?"

"Well, well, uncle, pray let us retire; this person, whoever he may be, is undoubtedly to be found, and doubt not but I shall be ready——"

"You be ready!—you be d——!—Found! What! I suppose you mean to join in the plot to persuade me out of my senses—you, too, mean to confederate with that imp of the devil's begetting, Nicholas, to drive me mad!"

"Indeed, sir, I do not; I know nothing of my cousin's plans, nor do I see how he can be at all concerned in the present business, as he is now at Oxford."

"It's a lie—it's an infernal lie—the scoundrel!—it was Nick, and I'll swear it. But I'll work the dog!—D—— him! I'll disinherit him—I'll not leave him so much land

as would fill a flower-pot—a rascal! horsewhip me! pull my nose!"

I was thunderstruck! My Cousin Nicholas then was the object of all this excess of indignation—but it was impossible—Nicholas, with all his addiction to mischief, could never have gone such lengths as Sir Oliver spoke of; besides, I was morally certain that he had now been at Oxford more than a week. At all events, the point to be gained at present was to get my uncle away; and this, partly through the assistance of Sir John Allanby, a college friend who had once accompanied me on a visit to the Hall, and who at this period joined me, I at length succeeded in accomplishing.

We adjourned to the New Hummums, Sir Oliver absolutely foaming with rage, like a fresh-drawn bottle of his favourite Edinburgh ale in the dog-days. He was, indeed, "*completely up.*" Having obtained a private room, and ordered some refreshment, I allowed my uncle's fury some time to evaporate in, before I hazarded a question as to the origin of his discomposure. After a slight repast, at which the baronet, in spite of his anger, played his part to admiration, a plentiful supply of his favourite beverage soothed him into some degree of returning mansuetude, till the ebullition of his fury at length "in hollow murmurs died away."

Then, and not till then, did I venture a query as to the particulars of his adventure, and learned, amidst many interruptions, occasioned by his oft rekindling ire, that I had not quitted his side five minutes before a person in a drab riding-frock entered the box, whom Sir Oliver, notwithstanding his dress, which was cut in the very extreme of the fashion, his dark moustaches and military spurs, at once recognized as his own son.

"Nick!" cried Sir Oliver in amaze, "Nick,—can I believe my eyes?—What the d—l are you doing here, sir, when I believed you to be hard at your studies?—Nick, I say, come back directly, you rascal, and answer me."

The gentleman whom he addressed, having merely cast a cursory glance round the theatre, was retiring, when the

latter part of the baronet's speech caught his attention. For an instant he paused, half turning to a friend who leaned upon his arm, as if under the impression that the words must have been directed to him; but seeing no indication in his countenance of that having been the case, he once more faced about, and asked, in a tone of astonishment, "Did you address yourself to me, sir?"

"To you, sir? ay, to be sure—whom else do you think I spoke to? I tell you what, Nick——"

"Really, sir, you have the advantage of me," interrupted the other; "I do not recollect that I have ever had the honour of your acquaintance."

"Why, you impertinent puppy!" thundered Sir Oliver, lost in amaze at what he conceived to be the unparalleled impudence of his own offspring,—"do you mean to deny me? Do you mean to tell me to my face that you are not my son, Nicholas Bullwinkle?"

"Upon my word, sir, I lament to say that I am not fortunate enough to possess so mild and engaging a papa," returned his antagonist, whose surprise at this attack seemed now to be fast merging in the amusement he began to derive from it; "and I much fear," added he, "that even if I were inclined to admit your claim to paternity, and to solicit your blessing in the hope of soon enjoying a thumping legacy, my mamma would by no means be disposed to sanction your pretensions, being, as she is, already provided with a respectable elderly gentleman, whom she has long since honoured with the title of lord and master, and complimented as the author of my being.—Eh? Sybthorpe, what think you?"

"Ho! ho! ho! Famous, Tommy, 'pon honour!" shouted Mr. Sybthorpe.

Horace has with great truth, as well as shrewdness, observed, that

> "Segniùs irritant animos demissa per aurem,
> Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus;"

and my uncle, in this trying moment, confirmed the truth of the poet's testimony. Had any one *told* Sir Oliver that his son Nicholas had slipped away from college, and

taken a clandestine trip to London, in all probability the account would have been received without much manifestation of surprise, and with no great degree of indignation against what, if we may draw any inference from his usual mode of reasoning on hearing of any of my cousin's freaks, he would, in all probability, have considered as a youthful frolic, not altogether unbecoming a "lad of spirit." But when he found himself, as he supposed, most unexpectedly brought into immediate contact with him in the very act of his delinquency, and, above all, laughed at, absolutely disowned, and, to use a favourite phrase of his own, "made quite a May-game of" by his lively offspring;—when, too, it is recollected that he, in general, only approved of, and smiled at, Nicholas's flights of fancy, so long as his wit was directed against others, it need occasion no surprise if his anger now knew no bounds, but amounted almost to frenzy. It was with difficulty he found words to express his feelings with, but when they did come forth, they rushed along in an animated flow of overbearing eloquence, as the long pent-up torrent, having once surmounted the barriers opposed to it, springs forward with tenfold energy from the temporary restraint it has experienced. Stunning as was its effect, the stranger, whom he persisted in calling his son, once more met him in midway; but his countenance had now lost the ironical gravity which gave point to his last speech, and assumed a severer cast, as he exclaimed, "Hold, Mr. Bullwinkle, if that be your name. I see your mistake, and can pardon it, as it seems to arise from a resemblance, real or fancied, between myself and some member of your family. On that account, as well as in consideration of your age and respectable appearance, I can excuse the language which you have just suffered to escape your lips; but, sir, it must not be repeated. If you wish to know my name, it is Hanbury, sir—Captain Hanbury, of the Coldstream Guards——"

"It is a lie!—it's Nicholas Bullwinkle, and nothing else," roared Sir Oliver, half-mad with passion—"but I'll be even with you, you scoundrel; I'll disinherit you, you ungrateful dog; I'll cut you off with a shilling; I'll——"

"Silence! old madman," cried the now angry officer; "another such word, and not even your years shall protect your shoulders from my horsewhip, or your nose from an application that may bring you to your senses!"

This was too bad; and the baronet, in the excess of his rage, raised his cane, but the impending blow was immediately intercepted by the spectators, who now interfered, and compelled Sir Oliver to desist, while Captain Hanbury, though not a little irritated, was prevailed upon by his friend Sybthorpe and others, just as I came up, to withdraw, nor continue an altercation with an old man, who was either mad or drunk, and one which could not but end discreditably to all concerned, if it were any farther pursued.

The principal part of these particulars I drew from Sir John Allanby, who, from an adjoining box, had witnessed a great part of the dispute; for Sir Oliver, though his wrath was somewhat abated, in the violence of its expression at least, was still too angry to give anything like a connected account of the fracas.

Two things struck me as being very unaccountable in this business, nor, after cool consideration, could I come to any decided opinion upon the merits of the case. In the first place, it was exceedingly improbable that a father could have been so deceived by any common similarity of person as to pronounce, and persist in declaring, an absolute stranger to be his only son; that in figure, in voice, in countenance (barring the whiskers, which might have been assumed), the resemblance should be so perfect as to impose upon one so well qualified to judge of the identity, was hardly to be conceived.—And yet, on the other hand, every other circumstance tended to support the probability that a strong personal likeness had indeed deceived Sir Oliver. The whole conduct of the individual attacked was precisely that of a man mistaken for another of whom he has no knowledge; and his behaviour, though on such a supposition it might even be entitled to the praise of forbearance, was still not such as a son, however well inclined he might be to

carry on a deception of the kind, could be imagined capable of practising towards a parent. It was impossible to believe that even Nicholas could threaten to violate the sanctity of a father's person, or dare to menace his gray hairs with indignity and outrage. Then, too, the name—Captain Hanbury, if such he were, had made no secret of his rank and character, while the proximity of the honourable corps of which he professed himself a member, laid him open, if an impostor, to almost immediate detection.

This last argument, I must confess, weighed most strongly with me, as I could not bring myself to believe that the natural sagacity of Nicholas would ever allow him to commit himself so far as to assume a name, his pretensions to which might be so easily and so soon disproved. At my suggestion, after the matter had been pretty well canvassed, the Army List for the month was procured from the coffee-room, and examined ; and there certainly, among the number of lieutenants in the Coldstreams, all bearing of course the rank of captain, stood the name of Thomas Walton Hanbury. This fact tended much to incline me towards the latter opinion ; and Sir Oliver himself, now that the object of his wrath was removed from his view, was, as I could see, staggered, especially when Allanby, repeating the name two or three times over, as if to aid some faded recollection, declared that he had a vague idea of having somewhere or other either met with, or heard of, a Captain Hanbury of the Guards, and that the impression upon his mind was, that the person who bore that name was a young man of family and honour, though said to be rather too much addicted to enjoying, in their fullest extent, the pleasures afforded by the metropolis.

At this account, Sir Oliver, in whose opinion Sir John held a high rank, became evidently more thoughtful and embarrassed. At length he exclaimed,—"I'll tell you what, nephew Charles, nothing on earth but my own eyes shall ever convince me that the jackanapes who threated to pull my nose two hours ago was not my Nick !—But I'll be resolved :—Yes, before I utterly send

him to the d—l, I'll be resolved. I'll hamper the puppy. My determination is taken.—By daybreak to-morrow, I'll be off to Oxford, and woe betide the rascal, if I find that he has been outside the college-gates for this month past!"

There is a particular breed of animals, which courtesy forbids me to name, proverbial for the resistance they oppose to any one who would lead or drive them. Sir Oliver, when his resolution was once taken, was scarcely less persevering than the most obstinate porker of them all. In vain did I suggest the avowed reason of his coming to town, and the anxiety I laboured under to be properly introduced to Lord Manningham, though, sooth to say, I was not altogether sorry for what I considered as at least a respite, if not a reprieve. My uncle was positive; and after having opposed him as long as I thought decency required, I was at length obliged to acquiesce in his determination. He put into my hands the re-written letter of my mother, which he told me I might present myself on the morrow if I pleased; and I heard him, with no small satisfaction, on our return to the hotel, order a post-chaise to be in readiness the next morning at five o'clock, to carry him the first stage on his way to Alma Mater. When I rose the next day, I found that he had been gone four hours, and was by that time about half-way on the road to the place of his destination.

Let not the reader think, meanwhile, that I had forgotten my engagement with Mesdames Wilkinson and Morgan. Far from it. I had taken advantage of a temporary cessation in the conversation, while Sir Oliver was deeply engaged with his lobster, and leaving Allanby to entertain him, had slipped back to the theatre, in order to keep my appointment. But I might have well saved myself the trouble, inasmuch as the parties I was in quest of had already quitted the house, not wishing, in all probability, to avail themselves of the services of so forward a cavalier as myself. This, however, gave me much less disturbance than it otherwise would have done, as I was now in possession of the name and occupation of

Mrs. Wilkinson, and felt little doubt but that, with such a clue, a very trifling degree of patience and perseverance would enable me to ascertain her abode. I therefore returned, and rejoined the two baronets, having been hardly missed by either the one or the other.

Full of newly-raised hopes from the auspicious rencontre of the preceding evening, I was despatching my breakfast with much more deliberation and satisfaction than I had done of late, when the waiter delivered me a letter, just brought in by the twopenny post, and, as far as I could decipher the hieroglyphics which composed the superscription, intended for myself. It was addressed to—

"Muster Stuffart,
"Taffystork Hothell,
"Coffin Garding,"

and contained the following communication :—

"Sur,—I haf fund out hoo the ladies you nose about ham, han wear they is ; han this is hall I dares to sey, for fire of haccidence ; but hif you wil com to wear your nose, han wring has husal, you shal larn more frum your loven Sarvant tell deth,

"Sary Jennens."

"*Sicks a'clock,*
"*Vensday hafternone.*"

Never did that egregious antiquary Thomas Hearne chuckle with greater delight over a newly-deciphered Celtic inscription than did I on unravelling the hidden meaning of this, to me, most precious of manuscripts. I kissed the dear dirty piece of paper and delicious pot-hooks a thousand times ; and scarcely did that favourite device of Cupid's signet, the deep indentation of the thimble-top on the half-masticated wafer, escape the same vivid token of my regard. I could not doubt but that my better genius had at length surmounted the various provoking obstacles thrown in his way by the demon of mischance, and that I was at last to be made happy with the intelligence I had

so long and so eagerly desired to obtain. Oh! how I blessed the happy quarrel of the preceding evening, which, by so opportunely removing Sir Oliver from the scene of action, left me free as air to follow the dictates of my own inclination, without the interruption and restraint which his presence would necessarily have imposed. I lost not a moment in repairing to Jermyn-street, nor did Miss Jennens keep me long in suspense. She told me that all her endeavours to discover who the ladies were, or whence they came, had been ineffectual till the day before, when, to her great joy, the elder of them came once more in a hackney-coach to call on Mrs. Morgan; that on her going upstairs, she (Sally) had taken an opportunity of questioning the coachman as to the place whence he had brought his fare. A proffered pot of the infusion of molasses and coculus indicus, by courtesy termed beer, rendered honest Jarvis communicative, and obtained her the information she wanted. He had brought the lady from No. 84 in Grosvenor-square, where she lived, as he inferred from what fell from one of the servants, who put her into the coach, in the capacity of housekeeper. Sally added that, after taking tea together, the lady and Mrs. Morgan had gone to the play, whence they returned, earlier than usual, in a coach; that "the lady" did not then get out, but merely set her companion down; after which my informant distinctly heard the order given to "drive to 84, Grosvenor-square."

While Sally Jennens was finishing her account, my hands were already employed in rummaging my pocket-book for the letter which had been, the evening before, given to me by my uncle. It was readily found, and I hastily reperused its address. I was before sure I could not have mistaken it: it was the same,—"To the Right Hon. Viscount Manningham, Grosvenor-square, London," with the magic number, "84," legibly inscribed in the O.P. angle. The very house!

Closely did I cross-examine the chambermaid respecting her certainty of the correctness of the number. The girl was positive, and her testimony was repeated with the firmness of a Jew qualifying for bail at the Old Bailey;

while I hardly knew whether to hope or fear that her story might be true in all its parts. She persisted, however, that she had heard the number distinctly on both occasions, and that she could not be mistaken. I gave her a reward, which produced me in return a curtsey down to the ground, and retired, exceedingly mystified and much puzzled as to my future mode of proceeding.

Was it possible that my fair *incognita* was indeed domesticated with Mrs. Wilkinson, and residing under Lord Manningham's roof? and if so, in what capacity? or was she but a friend of the housekeeper who had taken her to the theatre? Could it be that she was Miss Stafford herself? The idea startled as it struck me; but I dismissed it sorrowfully from my mind as unlikely, and indeed absurd. The utter improbability that the Honourable Amelia Stafford, the admired heiress of one of the most wealthy and respected noblemen in the three kingdoms, should accompany a domestic to the pit at Covent Garden; or that, even if she were inclined so to commit herself, her father, whose notions of decorum and etiquette, especially where females were concerned, were remarkably rigid,—that *he* should permit so great a violation of both, and that, too, without any adequate motive,—it was not possible to believe it.

One circumstance alone seemed at the first view to favour the supposition. A carriage, it appeared, attended too by servants, had called on the eventful evening when I first saw the party, and conveyed them away from Mrs. Morgan's; but I had omitted to inquire whether it had in the first instance carried them there; and for the servants of gentlemen in London to make use of the carriages of their masters, after setting them down at their various engagements, and to employ the said carriages during the interval, at the expiration of which their attendance would be again required, was, as I well knew, no uncommon occurrence.

Or it might be that this young lady was the daughter of some person in a respectable station in life, and intrusted temporarily to Mrs. Wilkinson's care—a supposition which was much strengthened by the marked deference which I

could not fail to remark in the good woman's behaviour towards her, and which had first given rise to the idea that the parties were not connected by any ties of consanguinity; this idea, too, derived added confirmation from certain points in Mrs. Wilkinson's demeanour when I encountered her for the second time. All these conjectures, however, led to no satisfactory termination, nor could I draw any certain conclusion from combining them. As to the booby who made the third person in the party, I easily ascertained from Sally that he was a son of Mrs. Morgan's, and a junior clerk in one of the public offices.

Deeply immersed in cogitation, as I wandered through the now crowded streets, scarcely knowing whither I was walking, my feet seemed instinctively to convey me towards the quarter whither my thoughts had already strayed, and I found myself all at once perambulating the northern side of Grosvenor-square.

The door of an elegant mansion, in the angle nearest to me, stood open: a respectable-looking man-servant, in a plain suit, was in the entrance, while two others, in handsome liveries of green and gold, were employed in opening the door of a fashionable, dark-green town chariot (the panels of which were simply ornamented by a plain crest, surmounted by a viscount's coronet), and assisting its occupants to alight. A tall, gentlemanly-looking personage, in an undress military blue frock, with his hair *en queue*, and his striking figure a little bowed by age, stepped out first, and turning, offered his hand to facilitate the descent of a beautifully-formed female figure, whose plain white satin spencer, and Spanish hat of the same delicate material, exhibited to advantage a person cast in the truest mould of elegance and grace. As she tripped lightly into the hall, she half-turned to adjust some little derangement of her dress; and one glimpse only, hastily caught beneath the snowy plume that vibrated gracefully above her polished brow, was sufficient to impress upon my mind the recollection of a countenance which, once seen, could never again be eradicated from my memory. It was herself,—radiant in excess of loveliness,

and looking, if possible, even more beautiful than when I had last beheld her. I hastened forward, unconscious of what I purposed; but it was too late. The door had already closed, and shut her from my view.

"Lord Manningham's carriage, I believe?" said I to the servant, who was now mounting the box, after having drawn up the blinds of the chariot, and closed the door.

"It is, sir," he replied, respectfully touching his hat, and in a moment the vehicle was out of sight.

I could no longer doubt. This, then, was the beautiful Amelia Stafford!—the fair being who was already prepared to look with so favourable an eye upon the addresses of her unknown admirer, and who was already the idolized object of that favoured and happy mortal! I hesitated no more; doubt, fear, and anxiety at once gave way before the renovating warmth of love, as the dews of morn before the rising beams of a brilliant summer sun.

The urgency of my summons brought a servant immediately to the door.

"Inform Lord Manningham," said I, "that Mr. Charles Stafford requests to be admitted to his presence." I heard the man deliver the message at a door which opened from the entrance-hall to a breakfast-parlour on the right. The recollection of my gallant father, whose beloved brother would so soon press me to his heart, kindled my enthusiasm, and filled my young bosom with ten thousand nameless emotions. I had already advanced half across the hall, in my eagerness to grasp the hand of a relative who had evinced such noble sentiments, such generous intentions, in my favour, burning to meet his paternal caresses with a due return of correspondent warmth, when I heard these words issue from the interior of the room towards which I was advancing, as they were delivered to the servant who had announced me, and who yet stood with the door half open in his hand:—

"Mr. Charles Stafford!—Turn the scoundrel out of the house instantly, and never suffer him to enter these doors again!!"

CHAPTER X.

"Obstupui, steteruntque comæ, et vox faucibus hæsit."
VIRGIL.

In amaze
I gaze,
And in all sorts of ways
Stands my hair,—when my voice I endeavour to raise
I find through my jaws I can't squeeze it!

A "PRETTY PARTICULAR HANDSOME FIX."—ASTONISHMENT.—INDIGNATION.—TWO LETTERS, AND ONE ANSWER.

READER, if thou art a sportsman, thou hast doubtless often seen, in some fine thick stubble of newly-reaped wheat, or equally attractive covert of umbrageous turnip, the well-trained Don, or stanchest Ponto, check himself suddenly in full career, and become, on the instant, fixed, immovable; every limb and muscle stretched to its utmost tension, and scarcely exhibiting any sign of life.

Or if—as I would fain flatter myself may be the case—if thou art some amiable and accomplished young lady, who, despite the warning voice of "mamma," and the harsher remonstrances of "papa," art in the habit of soothing the soft sorrows of thy sentimental soul by the perusal of the last new novel, to while away the tedious moments until "the captain" calls—then hast thou, as undoubtedly, in the course of thy studies, fallen in with that wonderful account of the Petrified City, in which men, women, children, dogs, cats, old maids, and other domestic animals, are described as standing transformed to stone, each in the precise attitude which it had assumed at the moment of the miraculous and sudden metamorphosis.

This city, by the way, certain modern travellers assure us, is still *in esse*, and to be found somewhere between Tunis and Timbuctoo; though none of them, as far as I

can find, have actually made their bivouac within its precincts.

Or if thou art of "the Livery," reader, then hast thou, perchance, beheld the alderman of thy ward, at my Lord Mayor's feast, with fixed eye, and dropping jawbone, sink back into his elbow-chair, after his ninth basin of callipee.

Or if thou art a bachelor of arts, thou hast read, it may be (for I would not hazard an assertion rashly), of the singular properties of the Gorgon's head,—and of the Knaresborough Well that turned an elderly gentleman's wig into stone in fifteen seconds.

If, unhappily, thou art none of all these, then must I despair of conveying to thy mind anything like a correct idea of the absolute immobility of form and feature,—the utter suspension of animation, which paralysed all my faculties, as sounds so unexpected and inauspicious struck thus suddenly on my sensorium!—nor had I in any degree recovered myself when the servant, a respectable-looking man, having closed the parlour-door, returned and informed me, in a hesitating tone, "His lordship had commanded him to say, that neither at present, nor at any future period, would it be convenient for him to receive the visits of Mr. Charles Stafford."

Aghast as I was, I at length recovered myself so far as to reply, that I was confident there must be some mistake in the matter, as I had come on Lord Manningham's own express invitation, and was indeed his lordship's nephew. The man firmly, but respectfully, replied, that he was certain no mistake had been committed in the name, and that his lord's orders were peremptory. Not choosing therefore to enter into any altercation with a servant, and, indeed, but too well convinced, by the evidence of my own ears, that the man had softened, rather than aggravated the harshness of the message of which he was the bearer, I quitted the house, and regained the street, in a state of confusion, arising from mingled anger, mortification, and disappointment, at once pitiable and ludicrous.

"So then!" I exclaimed at last, when a five minutes' perambulation of Brook-street had furnished me with

breath sufficient to form into articulate sounds—"So then! this is the 'paternal reception'—this is the fulfilment of those 'generous intentions in my favour,' which my kind but deceived mother has sent me up to London to experience! A mighty courteous and 'fatherly reception,' truly! But this business rests not here; I will probe this infamous mockery to the bottom, and, were he twenty times my uncle, Lord Manningham shall repent the unprovoked insult he has dared offer to a Stafford."

My indignation having once found vent in words, relieved itself in some degree by the use of them; but, as passion subsided, my astonishment revived and increased.

What could be the meaning of the treatment I had received? Was it possible that Lord Manningham, a nobleman of grave and dignified habits, one whose reputation for the possession of every accomplishment that adorns the gentleman, the soldier, and the scholar, stood unimpeachable,—that a man who had always professed, and, as I had every reason to believe, felt, the strongest and most disinterested regard for his deceased brother—that *he* should wantonly, and without provocation, go out of his way, merely for the purpose of wounding the feelings and disgracing the character of that brother's only child —of one, too, who, neither in fact nor by implication, could ever have given him offence, and to whose very person he was a stranger? It was altogether unaccountable—was incredible—and the longer I reflected, the more convinced did I feel that some mystery enveloped the whole transaction, the intricacies of which I was at present completely incompetent to unravel. The more I pondered upon the circumstance of my extraordinary exclusion from Grosvenor-square, the more certain this inference appeared, when at once the question occurred,—Had I been traduced?—had any villain, envious of my rising prospects, aspersed my character, and painted me, perhaps, to my rigidly correct relation, in all the sombre colours of his own malignity? But even then, was I to be condemned unheard? Were all the partial representations of a fond and anxious mother, eager to promote the success of a beloved son, to sink at once before the

suggestions of a comparative stranger, without any room allowed for investigation or inquiry? Could my uncle be displeased at my having so long delayed to avail myself of his invitation? I could hardly think, that, in such a case, he would, without leaving any opening for explanation or apology, inflict a punishment so glaringly disproportionate to the offence.

On the whole, I could not but conclude that, either from some misapprehension, or the malicious interference of an enemy, Lord Manningham had been induced to credit some report, highly derogatory to my character, which, on every account, it behoved me to clear up. Unwilling, therefore, as I was to agitate my mother unnecessarily, I resolved to forbear at present from writing to the Hall, and to employ the interval between the present time and Sir Oliver's expected return from Oxford in the elucidating, if possible, this strange occurrence.

As a preliminary step, I took the first opportunity, on reaching the Tavistock, to despatch a porter to Grosvenor-square with the following letter:—

"Tavistock Hotel, Covent Garden.

"My Lord,—After the very extraordinary and mortifying repulse which I experienced at your door this morning, nothing but a sense of what is due to myself, and to those with whose friendship and affection I am honoured, could have induced me to trouble your lordship any farther.

"In what that very cavalier repulse, as unexpected as undeserved, could have originated, I am at a loss to imagine. I take leave, however, to remind your lordship that I presented myself on your own express and unsolicited invitation, and that the letter, of which I was the bearer, from the honoured widow of the late Colonel Stafford, might at least, I should conceive, have secured her son from insult or contempt.

"The only way in which I can account for such treatment, is the supposition, that malevolent and slanderous tongues may have dared to misrepresent some motive or

action of my life, without my being aware of it. If this be the case, from my father's brother I entreat as a favour, and from Lord Manningham I demand as a right, an opportunity of vindicating my conduct.

"In the firm belief that the unpleasant circumstance, to which I allude must have had its source in mistake or calumny, I have the honour to subscribe myself, my lord, your lordship's very obedient nephew and servant,

"CHARLES STAFFORD."

"*To the Right Hon. the Viscount Manningham,*
"*Grosvenor-square.*"

The interval which necessarily elapsed between the despatch of this epistle and the reception of the eagerly-expected answer, would have been a severe trial to my patience, but for the appearance of a visitor, whose presence and communication served, in some degree, to fill up the pause, and to abstract from the tediousness of time. This visitor was Allanby, whom, on parting with him the night before, I had requested to gain any information he might be able to procure, that would tend to throw a light upon my uncle's mysterious adventure at Drury-lane.

Sir John had good-humouredly promised to comply with my wishes, and now assured me that there was every reason to suppose that Sir Oliver had really been mistaken in the person of the gentleman with whom he had so decidedly claimed consanguinity.

On inquiry, he had ascertained from an officer of the Coldstream, with whom he had a family connection, not only that Captain Hanbury, of that very distinguished regiment, had been in London on the previous evening, but also that he had actually been at the theatre, and had afterwards, at the Guards' Club House, given to some of his friends, in the informant's hearing, an animated account of "a famous good row," which he had just had at the play-house, the particulars of which Sir John's relative had not had sufficient curiosity to attend to.

In consequence of this intelligence, Allanby, decided as

he now considered the matter to be, resolved on availing himself of an introduction, readily offered by his friend, when he had explained his reason for wishing for one, and on calling upon the gallant captain, ostensibly for the purpose of making excuses in Sir Oliver's name for the mistake into which he had unadvisedly fallen, and thus to put the matter beyond dispute. On reaching his lodgings in Albemarle-street, however, he found that Captain Hanbury had started, a few hours before, with a party of friends, for Windsor, and that the time of his return was altogether uncertain.

I could have wished, for my own satisfaction, that the friendly baronet had succeeded in obtaining a personal interview with the gentleman, though, on reconsidering the whole circumstance, I could not fail to join with him in the conviction, that my uncle had indeed laboured under a delusion, and was now gone upon a wild-goose chase, a fact of which, till this moment, I could not help entertaining a considerable degree of doubt. I gave Allanby many thanks for the trouble he had so kindly taken, and he had just risen for the purpose of leaving me, after an ineffectual attempt to prevail on me to dine with him, when the long expected reply to my appeal was put into my hands by the well-remembered lackey in the "green and gold."

I retreated to a window to peruse it, and read as follows:—

"Sir,—The letter you have just thought proper to transmit, convinces me of what I could scarcely have conceived possible,—that your worthlessness and folly are even exceeded by your audacity.

"That you came hither at 'my express and unsolicited invitation' is true; that invitation, sir, was dictated by the affection I ever bore your gallant father,—a father whose name you should blush to pronounce,—and by the hope that in the representative of his person I should find the inheritor of his virtues. Had that 'Colonel Stafford,' whose name you dare to profane, lived to witness this disgraceful conduct of his degenerate son, it

would have broken his heart. I can no longer lament his decease.

"The whole of your dishonourable career is now fully known to me; to much of it, especially to your infamous tampering with the honesty of a servant, I had previously been an indignant, though unsuspected, witness. Your insinuation as to the agency of slander and calumny is as despicable as you know it to be false, and your behaviour will admit neither vindication nor apology.

"Miss Stafford holds you in the contempt you merit; the bauble which your artifices forced upon her has been transmitted to your mother, together with the lamentable detail of her son's profligacy.

"Desist, young man, from intruding any farther upon the members of a family who disown and despise you, or you may be taught that not even the fond recollection of departed worth, nor the name which you bear and disgrace, will longer prove your protection from the chastisement you deserve, or operate as a motive to forbearance on "MANNINGHAM."

This gentle and conciliating epistle was duly endorsed to "Charles Stafford, Esq., Tavistock Hotel."

Its contents rekindled at once the smothered embers of my anger, and furnished fresh materials for my surprise.

Galling and contemptuous as were the terms in which it was couched, the very natural indignation I experienced on its perusal was quickly merged in wonder. Had, then, my name and person been all the while so well known to her whose address I had made so many efforts to discover? Had all my actions been so closely watched and observed, at the very time when my whole soul was occupied in watching and observing those of others, and that too without success? Had even that, as I believed, most recondite circumstance, my having "tipped" Sally Jennens with five guineas for her information, been open to the inspection of some latent looker-on? And then the vinaigrette—the so much despised "bauble"—which I had purchased as a means of gaining access to my then

unknown charmer, had, as it appeared, reached its destination (a fact which I had more than doubted), and had been since returned with ignominy "to my mother!"—I was lost in amazement.

But admitting all this—admitting that Lord Manningham himself had, which I could hardly have supposed possible, witnessed the whole of my manœuvres to obtain access to his daughter,—was there anything so very reprehensible in my conduct as to justify the reproach and vituperation contained in his letter, and the ignominious epithets therein applied to it? If, in the eagerness of my desire to get possession of the address of a young lady, I *had* bestowed a trifling douceur upon a servant-girl, was there anything in the transaction to warrant the charge of "profligacy," or of "tampering with a servant's honesty?" What if I had intruded on that young lady a paltry trinket? Of impertinence she might perhaps with justice have accused me, but surely not of "worthlessness," or "disgraceful conduct."

Surely nothing but the very spirit of puritanism itself could affix epithets so severe to actions so trifling, and, as I thought, so venial, in their nature. But so it was; and as pride alone would have prevented my making any further attempt at conciliating Lord Manningham, even had I seen the remotest chance of succeeding,—which I did not,—I resolved to avoid the unpleasant situation of being the herald of my own disgrace to Sir Oliver, and of being forced to reply to all the various queries with which I knew he would assail me, by leaving London immediately, and before his return.

Besides, I reflected that, should I act otherwise, and await his arrival, it was by no means improbable that, on hearing my story, he would, in his anxiety to have matters simplified, insist on my accompanying him once more to Grosvenor-square,—a measure against which every feeling of my soul revolted,—and subjecting myself, perhaps, to a repetition of the mortifying indignities I had already sustained; or that, in the event of my refusal, Sir Oliver himself, of whose pertinacity of opinion I had had ample experience, might take it into his head

to be offended with me, and thus I might seriously quarrel with both my uncles, without any intention of affronting either.

This determination, therefore, I failed not to put in practice as quickly as possible, and, leaving a couple of notes to be delivered after my departure, once more set out on my return to Underdown Hall.

The first of these billets was addressed to Sir Oliver, to be given to him on his arrival, and ran thus :—

"My dear Uncle,—Circumstances of an awkward nature, which I feel myself unable at present either to control or explain, have rendered it impossible for me to put in execution the intention with which I came to London.

"A strong prejudice, whence originating I know not, appears to exist against me in the mind of Lord Manningham. Time may, perhaps, obliterate a feeling which seems to me as unaccountable as I know it to be unjust; in the mean while, it may be better, perhaps, for all parties, that we should come as little into contact as possible. I have, therefore, retired to the Hall, and, in the hope of soon witnessing your own return to the house which your indulgence has taught me to consider our mutual home, remain your affectionate nephew,

"C. Stafford.

"P.S.—I have been able to ascertain, almost to demonstration, that my Cousin Nicholas had no hand whatever in the unpleasant business at the theatre, but that your antagonist was indeed the very gentleman whom he represented himself to be."

The other was directed to Lord Manningham :—

"My Lord,—The son of that Colonel Stafford, 'whose decease you no longer regret,' is only withheld by the respect due to his father's memory, and the recollection of the near connection between that revered parent and Viscount Manningham, from fully expressing to the latter

his sentiments on the unfounded aspersions cast by him upon a character as unspotted as his own.

"Be assured, my lord, that the 'members of your family' *will* be 'no more intruded on' by one who now values your lordship's favour as little as he dreads the resentment with which you think proper to menace him.—I have the honour to be, your lordship's servant,

"CHARLES STAFFORD."

"*To Viscount Manningham, &c. &c. &c.*"

CHAPTER XI.

Inter Sylvas Academi quærere verum.
HORACE.

Through academic groves
The puzzled hero roves
To seek if facts be facts,——or all a mere hum!

A HASTY MAN.—A SICK MAN.—AN ANGRY MAN.—AN OBSEQUIOUS MAN.—A LEARNED MAN.—AND A PUZZLED MAN.

DURING part of this period, and while I was the alternate prey of fear, hope, disappointment, and indignation, Sir Oliver had proceeded, as fast as four stout roadsters could carry him, towards Oxford, anathematizing my Cousin Nicholas at least ten times between every milestone and its successor with bitter vows of taking the most complete and summary vengeance, in case he should find that his son had deceived him, and in his person had actually menaced the nasal organs of a Bullwinkle with manual compression.

On his arrival at the Angel, he scarcely waited to discharge the postboys, ere, hurrying, with the utmost expedition of which he was capable, to the venerable edifice of which his son was—or ought to be—an inmate, he inquired for the rooms of Mr. Nicholas Bullwinkle. They were immediately pointed out to him by an obsequious

porter, and my uncle proceeded through a rank of marvelling freshmen, who were congregated in the quadrangle, to the staircase which led to his apartments. Sir Oliver tarried not to give even the usual petitionary knock at the inner door, but, turning the handle without scruple or delay, abruptly entered the room.

At a table loaded with folios of a most imposing bulk, and properly furnished with all the necessary adjuncts of pen, ink, and paper, clad in a long duffle wrapping-gown, with a pair of green spectacles upon his nose, and a rummer of water by his side,—sat my Cousin Nicholas.

His cheeks were pale, not to say haggard; his form attenuated, and his whole appearance that of a man suffering under the oppression of serious indisposition. The sudden entrance of Sir Oliver caused him to start, and communicated a visible degree of tremor to his whole frame: the pen actually trembled in his hand as he exclaimed, on hearing the noise, "Who's there? Sanderson, is that you?—you know I am reading, and can't see anybody."

"Nick!" quoth my Uncle Oliver, "is it you, Nick?—Speak to me, you rascal, and tell me, is that you?"

"My dear father!—impossible!—can I believe my eyes?—Here, Jem!—porter!—My dear sir, to what am I to attribute this very unexpected pleasure? Nothing the matter at the Hall, I hope?—Here, Jem, I say; come up directly and be —— to you!"

The concluding sentence of this address was uttered out of the window, to a "scout" in the quadrangle—(bells were rare in Brazenose)—and was delivered in a tone of the utmost impatience. Then placing a chair, the invalid once more felicitated himself on the arrival of his father, and extended his hand towards him, as if in expectation of a friendly shake.

"No, sir," cried the baronet, most unceremoniously rejecting his proffered salute. "Sit down, sir,—sit down and answer me a few questions, before I make up my mind whether I am ever to acknowledge you as my son again, or not."

"My dear sir, what can be the meaning of this most

alarming preface? However, I am much too happy to see you, on any terms, to quarrel with the cause which affords me the pleasure of your company."

"I do not believe one word of it," quoth my uncle; "you would as lief see the devil, sir. But here I am; and here I mean to remain, till you have told me how you dared offer me such an insult as you did last night; how you had the assurance" (my uncle's voice rose an octave) "to threaten to pull my nose!"

If anger was the predominant expression of Sir Oliver's countenance, astonishment seemed no less forcibly portrayed in that of my cousin. "Pull your nose, my dear father!—last night!—you surprise me; what can be the meaning of all this? Has any one dared to insult you? If so, be assured I shall resent it as a son ought to do; and I cannot tell you how highly gratified I feel that you should have taken the trouble of coming thus far to give me an opportunity of chastising the insolence of——"

"Be quiet, puppy, and answer me; nobody's insolence is to be chastised but your own. Tell me, sir, how dared you deny all knowledge of me, to my face, at Drury Lane, no longer ago than last night?"

"Drury La—!—my dear sir," cried the now alarmed Nicholas; "I have not been out of my room this fortnight: surely, sir, the fatigue of your journey, or something, has discomposed you. Let me offer you some refreshment. Why, Jem," continued my cousin, turning once more abruptly to the window, and carefully wrapping a silk handkerchief, that lay on the sofa near him, round his throat, as he opened it,—"Jem, do you mean to come up to-day, or not?"

"Nay, sir," cried Sir Oliver, "do not give Mr. Jem, whoever the gentleman may be, the trouble of walking up stairs, nor expose your own very delicate health to the influence of the cold air. I am neither drunk nor mad; so answer me in three words, and without any prevarication,—were you, or were you not, in London yesterday evening?"

"Not I, upon my word, Sir Oliver; and why you should imagine such a thing, I cannot, for the life of me,

conceive. Had I even entertained any intention of the kind, the indisposition under which I have been labouring for this fortnight past would alone have been sufficient to prevent my carrying it into effect,—to say nothing of my being engaged very busily in reading for my '*Little Go*.' My dear father, I am quite a skeleton; only look at me! —do feel my ribs!"

"Curse your ribs!" cried the baronet, "I'll break every one of them; I'll——"

Here the scout entered the room.

"Jem," said my Cousin Nicholas, "my father is just arrived in Oxford; go to the kitchen and buttery, and make them send up something immediately—and borrow me a bottle of wine, Jem: it is so long since I drank any, that I am afraid my own cellar will not afford one—and, Jem, come back and help me to put these books out of the way."

Jem stared, made a short quick bow, and was retiring, when his retreat was cut off by Sir Oliver—

"Stop one moment, Mister Jem,—if that is your name, —I beg of you; and please to inform me, Mister Jem, at what hour did this young gentleman return from London?"

The man looked all astonishment; he gazed alternately at my uncle and his son, and made no answer.

"Jem," said my cousin, "some officious blockhead or other has put it into my father's head that I was in town no longer ago than yesterday; you, I think, can satisfy him that I have not even left my room this fortnight till this very day, when I went, for the first time since my illness, to morning chapel."

"Very true, sir," returned Jem; "I called you—by your orders—at six o'clock.

"Indeed!" returned Sir Oliver; "I must, however, have better evidence than even that of the very respectable Mr. Jem, before I believe one syllable of the matter; so, Mr. Nicholas Bullwinkle, if you please, we will adjourn to the apartments of your tutor, and hear his opinion of the business—unless, indeed, the very delicate state of your health should render it dangerous for you to accompany me."

"By all means, sir; I will attend you with the greatest pleasure; indeed, I do not know but that the air may be of service to me. Jem,—my great-coat!"

The obsequious James produced the required surtout, which my cousin, having first taken off and leisurely wiped his spectacles, proceeded to indue, with a degree of deliberation that formed a fine contrast with the impatience manifested in every twist and turn of Sir Oliver's features. The bandana received a more careful and studied adjustment round the throat, and the usual paraphernalia of academic costume being duly arranged over all, Nicholas seemed prepared to accompany his father, when, before they reached the door of the apartment, he stopped suddenly, and exclaimed, "I beg your pardon, Sir Oliver, may I detain you one moment?—The tincture, Jem; surely it is time that I took my tincture?"

The obedient scout repaired to a closet on the other side of the room, from which he produced a half-pint bottle and a glass, into the latter of which he carefully poured two table-spoonfuls of a dark-coloured fluid, bearing a most suspicious resemblance to cherry-brandy. This he extended to my Cousin Nicholas, who received and swallowed it, not without a due contortion of visage; then, without any further attempt at delay, he followed the impatient baronet down the staircase, but *haud passibus æquis*, and supporting himself by the banister.

The pair proceeded in solemn silence; the younger gentleman having been suddenly cut short by the elder in the very commencement of an embryo dissertation on the medicinal qualities of "Huxham's Tincture of Bark."

In this way, notwithstanding the procrastination occasioned by the tardiness of my cousin, whose pace very little exceeded that which is termed by military men "marking time," the door of the Reverend Josiah Pozzlethwayte's apartment was at length attained, and they were received by that learned tutor with all the dignity of a fellow of a college, beautifully tempered by the urbanity of a gentleman, despite a slight shade of vexation, which a keen observer might have detected stealing over his countenance at the interruption his visitors occasioned

to the progress of a very erudite and entertaining little treatise on the various gerunds in *Di, Do,* and *Dum,* which he was on the point of completing, and offering to the world in three quarto volumes.

Sir Oliver, who was by no means a man of many words, introduced himself and his errand with truly Spartan brevity, while his polite auditor listened with attention, and replied to his inquiries in a manner which savoured more of the elegance of Attic, than the force and conciseness of Lacedemonian, oratory, while the classic mind of my Cousin Nicholas, who remained for some time a silent, though not uninterested observer, at once suggested to him "the image of a supposed Pericles listening to one of an imaginary Ephori."

This he afterwards told my uncle, who, not knowing anything of either of the gentlemen named, nor quite approving the expression of countenance with which the remark was uttered, was very near breaking his head in return for his elegant allusion.

The evidence, if such it may be termed, of the learned tutor was, however, equally in my cousin's favour with that of Jem East, the scout, and seemed altogether irreconcilable with Sir Oliver's hypothesis.

The Reverend Mr. Pozzlethwayte was a great logician; he could demonstrate, without the slightest difficulty, that although "John was a man, and Peter was a man," yet, from a want of the necessary "distribution of the Middle Term," it was by no means a legitimate consequence that "John was Peter;" he gave Sir Oliver most convincing reasons why it was impossible that his son should be, at one and the same time, present at two different places fifty-six miles asunder: he proved, first, that it was "Term Time at Oxford,"—secondly, that no Undergraduate could be absent without leave when it was "Term Time at Oxford,"—then, that my Cousin Nicholas was an Undergraduate,—after that, that my Cousin Nicholas had no leave of absence,—and then triumphantly drew his inference, that of course my Cousin Nicholas could not be absent during "Term Time at Oxford."

He changed his battery, and demonstrated that "a

man who was too ill to move could never have gone from Oxford to London : but my cousin was too ill to move ; *therefore* my cousin could not have gone from Oxford to London."

He argued from cause to effect, and then reasoned back again from effect to cause ; now he pressed his auditor with all the syllogistic energies of "*Major*," "*Minor*, and "*Consequence ;*" then he crushed him beneath the overwhelming weight of a "*Sorites ;*" and finally compelled him, by a judicious use of Socratic interrogation, to prove himself an unredeemed blockhead.

Sir Oliver,—who, in the discharge of what he called his duties as a magistrate for the county, had not unfrequently listened with admiration and conviction, "at sessions," to the luminous statements of the counsel on one side, till the equally brilliant effusions of the counsel on the other side provokingly brought the matter once more into doubt,—now, when the full tide of argument took a decided and uncontradicted turn, gave way to a torrent which he found it beyond his power to stem ; slowly and most reluctantly did he yield a grumbling assent to propositions which he was unable to refute, though almost equally unwilling to admit.

After sifting the matter as closely as he could, the result of all his inquiries was, that Mr. Bullwinkle had been "*æger*" for more than a fortnight ; and his sickly appearance certainly tended much to corroborate this representation. It was also ascertained, by reference to the Bible-clerk, that he had actually been at chapel that morning at half-past six ; "Jem," moreover, testified that he had himself summoned him from his bed half an hour before, while the rules of academic discipline precluded the opening of the college gates till after morning prayers. My cousin would have got his acquittal in any court in Christendom ; and Sir Oliver was obliged to succumb, which he at length did, but with a very bad grace, and as if only half convinced.

It is recorded of a right worshipful citizen, who thrice filled the civic chair of the greatest corporation in the world, and was honoured by his fellow-citizens at his

decease with a monument, erected to his memory at the public expense, and which still forms a principal ornament of that very Guildhall which had so often been the scene of his triumphs,—it is on record, I say, that he once overwhelmed a prime minister by an energetic declaration, that "*them there facts is stubborn things!*" Sir Oliver Bullwinkle could no more invalidate the force of Alderman Beckford's axiom than could the premier.

CHAPTER XII.

——— Oh! what damn'd minutes counts he o'er
Who dotes yet doubts,—suspects yet strongly loves.
Othello.

Noscitur a Naso!

He said he'd pull my nose!—I heard him say so.

CARDS, THE DEVIL'S BOOKS.—A RELAPSE.—WHAT'S IN A NAME?

THE worthy baronet and his hopeful heir retraced their steps towards the apartments of the latter, Sir Oliver hardly knowing whether he was pleased or sorry at the conviction which had been in a manner forced upon him.

That the character of his son had come out of the fiery ordeal to which it had been subjected pure and immaculate as a new-laid egg, was, to be sure, a subject of much self-congratulation; but then the unwelcome truth would force itself on his recollection, that in proportion as the conduct of Nicholas appeared blameless, his own must seem absurd; nor could he help feeling that, all things considered, he was cutting a tolerably ridiculous figure. In no very enviable state of mind he ascended the stairs of number 6, with much more of deliberation than had marked his progress down them an hour before, while the pace of Nicholas was accelerated in a corresponding ratio, so that they now contrived to keep tolerably well together.

On re-entering the room, a small card of invitation lay on the table, giving evident proof that, during their absence, the apartment had been invaded by a visitor. The small piece of pasteboard alluded to bore, moreover, an inscription as interesting to Sir Oliver as any in the Theban catacombs, or on the sarcophagus of Cheops himself, could be to a modern traveller, possessing, besides, the incalculable advantage of being much more easily deciphered. The words it displayed were,

"Wine with Hanbury,
"O.C.
"Friday, 11th."

And it was indorsed,

"N. Bullwinkle, Esq."

Had a basilisk met the eyes of my uncle, he could not have exhibited a more theatric and imposing start. The still slumbering embers of suspicion "flared up" at once into as bright a blaze as the real element from which this popular metaphor is taken emits when some unlucky imp of mischief hurls, with too unerring aim, a handful of pounded resin into the fire, for the purpose of astounding a dozing grandmother, or electrifying a maiden aunt. Every combustible particle in Sir Oliver's whole frame ignited on the instant.

"Hanbury!" exclaimed he, with the look, air, and voice of a male Tisiphone.

"A friend of mine, Sir Oliver," said Nicholas, with the most perfect composure, not perceiving,—or not choosing to perceive,—the effect which this name of bad omen had upon his father; "a college friend of mine, and a very good fellow he is, only rather too much of a bookworm: he is known here by the *sobriquet* of 'Sobersides.' I should like to join his party amazingly, if my health would permit me, for it is not often he ventures upon one; but the '*mens sana in corpore sano*,' you know, sir (Sir Oliver did *not* know), must be preferred to everything else; and as it is in vain to expect intellectual without corporeal health, I must, however reluctantly, give up the idea, for

I feel my nervous system is too much deranged to admit of my joining at present in any kind of gaiety, else, I must confess, I should like just to pop in my nose——"

"At a scoundrel's who swore he would pull your father's!" roared the indignant baronet, in the tones of a Stentor. Nicholas stood aghast. For the first time there appeared in the expression of his countenance a sort of indefinite alarm, which might perhaps have been interpreted into an apprehension that the intellects of his father were affected. It was some time before he found breath to utter,—

"My dear sir, do I understand you right? I thought it had been myself who had,—most unjustly, certainly,—fallen under your suspicion as the author of the outrageous insult offered to you; and now, when I have, I trust, satisfied you of the impossibility of the thing, you would seem to accuse my friend, a man whom I am morally certain you have never seen in your life. What can I think, Sir Oliver?"

"I don't care a farthing what you think, sir! What the d——l are your thoughts to me? I tell you again I am now fully convinced that you and your rascally friend, between you, are at the bottom of all this; but lead me to the jackanapes immediately! Let me see him, I say; and if I find I *have* been imposed upon after all—Come along directly, Nick; for if you refuse to go——"

"Refuse? Oh! not I, indeed, sir,—all over the University, if you please; and we'll ask every third man we meet whether he ever threatened to pull your nose. I have no objection, sir, I assure you."

Sir Oliver looked as if he had a great mind to knock my Cousin Nicholas down; but seeing him so very composedly occupied in resuming the gown which he had just divested himself of, and not perhaps finding any words at the moment adequate to the full expression of his confused feelings, he contented himself with biting his nether lip, and remained silent.

"Now I am ready, whenever you please, Sir Oliver. Where, may I ask, would you choose to commence your inquiries?"

"No sneering, puppy, but show me instantly to the fellow who left this card."

"With all my heart, sir. Poor Sobersides!—how he will stare! But may I beg you to be calm, Sir Oliver, as, I assure you, you will find yourself a second time mistaken."

Thus saying, Nicholas quietly began to descend the staircase, and led the way to the college-gate.

Totally unobservant of the venerable buildings that now surrounded him on all sides, and querulously cutting short his son's attempts to recommend them to his notice, the angry baronet kept close to his side, eyeing him occasionally with glances which seemed to indicate a suspicion that he would endeavour to run away, and at the same time grasping his arm with the force and tenacity of a smith's vice, as if fully determined to prevent his escape.

But Nicholas entertained no such intention: he kept steadily on, till, on passing the portal surmounted by the huge protection of gilt wood, which has somehow or other been, facetiously enough, designated as the Brazen Nose, —an appellation as little warranted by its anti-metallic appearance, as by its want of resemblance to the feature it is said to represent,—he again, in spite of the ungracious repulses which all his attempts at "lionizing" had hitherto met with, could not help directing his father's attention to the mystic emblem above him; but, in his present mood, the very word "nose" sounded harshly in the ears of Sir Oliver, and he again bade his son "cease his chattering," in no very dulcet tones.

On reaching the place of their destination, Mr. Hanbury's "oak" was open. A rap with the knuckles at his door was immediately answered by a cry of "Come in!" and Nicholas, with his father close at his heels, entered the room.

"Hanbury, my good fellow, how are you?" said the former, advancing with extended hand towards a young gentleman dressed in a morning gown, who rose from a sofa to receive him.

"I am sorry, Hanbury, I was not in the way this morning when you called, but I come to bring you my answer

in person. In the mean time, allow me to introduce to you my father—Hanbury—Sir Oliver Bullwinkle."

During this exordium, Sir Oliver had been narrowly scrutinizing the person of his new acquaintance, but found himself once more baffled in his expectations, as neither in feature, voice, nor figure, did the gentleman before him bear the slightest resemblance to the object of his resentment—the likeness was in the name alone.

Still the coincidence was most remarkable, that among the more particular friends, and in the immediate society of his son, he should meet with a person of so ominous a designation, that, if the name of the one had but been united with the person of the other, no reasonable doubt could any longer have remained upon his mind. He felt himself completely mystified;—he knew not what to believe or to reject, and therefore only bowed and stammered in reply to the easy and polite reception given to him by young Hanbury as the father of his friend.

"Bullwinkle," said their host to my cousin, after they had taken chairs, "I am sincerely glad to see you out again; you have had a sharp time of it; and, not to flatter you, your illness has pulled you down not a little. I called to-day, as I had heard from Jones this morning that you had been at chapel, in the hope of prevailing on you to meet a few friends here on Friday: we shall be a very quiet party."

"I never knew one otherwise at your rooms, Hanbury; and I believe, in spite of prudence, I should have joined you; but my father, as you see, is just arrived, and will not, I hope, leave Oxford for some days. My time must of course be entirely at his disposal."

"I trust, I need not say," returned Hanbury, "how much I should be gratified by Sir Oliver's company also on that occasion, or that I shall feel great pleasure if any services of mine can be acceptable to him. You are but weak as yet, Bullwinkle, and, I am sure, altogether unequal to the task of making the tour of the University. I shall be most happy if your father will accept me as your substitute."

Sir Oliver knew not what to make of all this. Mr. Han-

bury's manners and address were polished and prepossessing, and his attentions to himself flattering. Had he borne any other name in the world, his politeness would have been met with cordiality. As it was, a vague idea that he was duped still most pertinaciously occupied the baronet's mind, and repelled the growing inclination he felt to believe he had been indeed mistaken. By degrees, however, his suspicions gave way, especially when, in reply to one of the baronet's questions, "Whether he had any relative in the Guards?" Hanbury unhesitatingly informed him that he had an elder brother in the Coldstream, "a man, by the way, Sir Oliver, whom I could much wish to introduce to you, as I should like to see whether you would be able to discover in him that personal resemblance to my friend, your son here, which many of our acquaintance insist is so very strong a one."

"Indeed, sir!" asked Sir Oliver; "is the likeness so remarkable?"

"Astonishing, many of them affect to say; but, for my own part, I cannot say I see it in so strong a light as some do, who go the length of asserting that the pair might be taken for twins. Nevertheless, I admit that they are a good deal alike. Indeed, I am not sure but that this resemblance to poor Tom—(a worthy fellow at bottom, Sir Oliver, though I fear the dissipated scenes his profession exposes him to have rendered him not so steady as he used to be)—has tended not a little to cement the friendship which exists between your son and myself. Poor Tom! he certainly often puts me in mind of him!"

"Very often, indeed, I should think," returned Sir Oliver. "Confound me if I should know the difference between them."

"Indeed, Sir Oliver. You have seen my brother, then?"

"Why, I rather think I have—that is—Pray, sir, where may Captain Hanbury be at this moment?"

"Upon my word I can hardly say. In London, it is most likely—at least I received a letter from him (here it is), about three days ago, dated from the St. James's Coffee-house; but he is so very locomotive, that, for any-

thing I know to the contrary, he may be in the Hebrides by this time."

"I fancy, sir," replied the baronet, "he is scarcely so far north. By what you tell me, I am induced to suppose that I must have been, for a very few minutes, in his company last night;—but come, sir," continued he, "if you are not otherwise engaged, and will favour my son and me with your company to a quiet dinner at my inn, you shall hear the whole history of the occasion of my journey to Oxford, in which, to speak the truth, your brother cuts no inconsiderable figure."

"You raise my curiosity greatly, Sir Oliver, and I shall feel much pleasure in accepting your invitation."

During the whole of this dialogue, my Cousin Nicholas, who took no share in it, was busily employed in turning over the leaves of a parcel of books which lay on a side-table, apparently absorbed in his pursuit, and paying very little or no attention to the subject of the duetto in performance between his father and his friend; but now, seeing the former preparing to depart, he closed the volume which he had been examining, and inquired, with much gravity, "Where Sir Oliver would choose to go next?"

"Back again to London, to be sure," was the reply; "but come, before I start, let us see what we can have for dinner, for my journey has made me as hungry as a hunter."

Nature herself abhors not a *vacuum* more than did Sir Oliver. The fumes of anger, which had hitherto expanded his chest, and produced an artificial and fallacious plenitude, had now, in a great degree, evaporated, and his stomach might by this time be not unaptly compared to a balloon when an unlucky rent has suffered the major part of its gas to escape. He hurried his two companions to the inn, and ordered an excellent dinner, to which he did ample justice; nor was either of his guests at all behindhand in following his example. Nicholas, in particular, made a very hearty meal for an invalid; and the brisk circulation of a few flasks of very tolerable champagne seemed to produce an effect upon him to the

full as salutary as his favourite "Huxham's Tincture of Bark."

It was late before the party separated; nor did they break up for the night till Sir Oliver, who had by this time perfectly recovered his good-humour, voluntarily promised to rescind his determination of returning immediately, and to remain a day or two, and recreate his eyes with a sight of the "lions" of the university.

CHAPTER XIII.

Quodcunque ostendis mihi sic incredulus odi.
HORACE.

——— If ancestry can be in aught believed,
Descending spirits have conversed with man,
And told the secrets of the world unknown.
HOME.

A RIDE.—A WALK.—A SONG.—A CONVERSATION.—A DRY ARGUMENT.—A WET CONCLUSION.

THE —— mail-coach, in which I had secured myself a passage, contained also within its recesses a fat quaker, a pilot, an ailing child, and a woman afflicted with the toothache.

There are times when the happy temperament of our minds, arising from the eager anticipation of some expected enjoyment, or the full gratification of some darling desire, attunes our whole soul to harmony, and renders us careless and unobservant of those minor annoyances, which, in a less joyous mood, would prove no inconsiderable drawback on our felicity; there are also times, when, from sheer intensity of mental suffering, our faculties are so entirely absorbed as to remain unaffected by their presence, and even unconscious of their existence.

Neither of these was at present my lot; the irritable state of my feelings only rendered me the more alive to the miseries of my situation. The worthy member of the

Society of Friends, whose ample breadth occupied somewhat more than three-fourths of the seat, was my neighbour, and pinned me close up in one corner of the vehicle, without the possibility of my effecting a change of position even to avoid the direct stream of exhalation from the sailor who faced me, redolent of rum. The latter, having succeeded, that morning, in bringing a valuable cargo into the port of London, was now returning, by a less dangerous element, to the seaport to which he belonged, in order to wait for another job of the same kind, and, previously to occupying his present berth, had stowed in rather more than his usual proportion of grog. The female who sat by his side, was, as we soon learned from herself, the wife of an eminent cheesemonger in the Borough, going into the country on a visit to her relations; the coachman, doubtless for weighty reasons, had allowed her, although contrary to the strict letter of his regulations, to carry her son on her lap,—"as he was such a very little one,"—and the tortures I had already begun to experience were soon added to in a tenfold degree by her insisting on both the windows being closed to prevent the intrusion of the night-air, which, as she averred, much increased her own complaint, and would besides give her "little darling" cold.

Thus closely wedged, and in an atmosphere to be envied only by the unfortunate Englishmen once confined in the Black-hole at Calcutta, did we "roll along the turnpike road." The quaker snored, the child cried, its mother groaned, while my friend opposite, apparently insensible to all the disagreeables which so much annoyed myself, hummed

"Here a sheer hulk lies poor Tom Bowling,"

and tendered me his tobacco-box. On my declining to avail myself of this kind offer, in a tone which I laboured to render civil, he ceased his tune, and conveying a respectable portion of "shag" to his own mouth, prepared, with the utmost composure, to accompany my sleeping partner on the right in a most sonorous duet upon the same instrument. Oh! how I hated the whole party!

For nearly an hour had I sat thus, enduring the utmost degree of compression which the human frame is capable of bearing, muttering to myself, at every roll of the coach, "curses not loud but deep," and filling a situation not unlike that of a refractory culprit, whose obstinacy, in refusing to plead, has exposed him to the *peine forte et dure*, a method by which "the statute in that case made and provided" till lately directed that an answer should be squeezed out of the most refractory.

My mind was worked up to the highest pitch of irritation, when fortunately the coach stopped, and I perceived, at the door of a solitary public-house by the road-side, a relay with every preparation for changing horses. Eagerly did I avail myself of the opportunity afforded to exchange the confinement I had endured for a state of liberty, if only for a few moments; to let down the window, open the door, and spring from the vehicle to the ground, was the work of an instant. Heedless of the discomposure my abrupt secession had occasioned within, I proceeded to pace backwards and forwards by the side of the carriage, every limb revelling in its emancipation.

The night was a lovely one—

> "The silver moon unclouded held her way
> Through skies where I could count each little star."

The air was unusually warm for the time of year, and a gentle breeze gave a tremulous motion to the chequered light of the moonshine falling through the boughs, while its balmy breathings conveyed to the sense all the rich and fragrant perfume of an English spring. The silence was broken alone by the plaintive strains of a soft and mellow voice at a little distance, chanting in a subdued and melancholy tone, which fell grateful on the ear, and harmonized delightfully with the character of the scene. What a contrast to the exhalations of toddy and tobacco, and the serenade from which I had with so much difficulty escaped!

The peaceful calm which seemed to envelope all nature, animate and inanimate, operated upon my spirits as a

holy charm. My roused and angry passions were fast subsiding into a state of placidity, when the spell was rudely broken, and the sacred stillness of the night invaded by the hoarse voices of the guard and ostler, now high in oath respecting some mischance which had occurred to the *matériel* of the coach.

"My eyes! here's a rig!—I say, Bill, blow me if this here bar beesn't just asunder; show us a light!"

"Ey, ey, Jem, what say?—let me see; where is it?"

"*You* see!—you be ——; vot's the use of your seeing, spooney? show us a light, I tell 'ee!"

Bill obeyed grumbling, and entered the house to procure a candle, with which he soon returned, accompanied by the coachman, who had been discussing a glass of "summut short" within doors, and now added himself to the conclave.

"Broke, do ye say?" cried the latter, advancing the lantern towards the suspected fracture; "so it is, by gum —devilish near asunder too. This now was that c—d old mare coming down the hill; always a-kicking, a wicious old beast—I vonder master keeps sich warmint!"

"Come, Tom," returned the guard—"it's no use to stand growling here; Bill, get us a bit o' rope, will 'ee? We must splice her up as well as we can till we gets to B——" (the name of the next stage).

At this moment a human head was protruded from each window of the vehicle. The parley without had reached the ears of the personages within, already disturbed by my elopement; and, although they could not exactly gather the purport of the matter in debate, the manner in which the colloquy was carried on served to induce a suspicion that their own interests were somehow or other implicated in the result of the conference.

"What cheer, messmates?" asked the pilot, "she won't capsize, will she?" while the sonorous tones of the Quaker were heard from the opposite opening. Surprised into a temporary deviation from his usual mode of delivery, yet still preserving that formality of expression, which not even apprehended danger could subdue, he

exclaimed with unwonted rapidity, "Friend, aileth the leathern conveniency anything?" while the fair dispenser of currants and molasses, losing, or forgetting, her toothache in her alarm, half cried, half screamed, as the tar vacated his berth to give his assistance, "Lauk-a-daisey me! vy vot's the matter vith the shay, I vonders?"

Finding that the arrangements necessary for the continuing our journey in safety were likely to take up some little time, and aware of the general correctness of a homely adage, "that too many cooks are apt to spoil the broth," I did not presume to encumber with my inefficient aid those whose experience in the mysteries of splicing, dove-tailing, and all the endless varieties of ligature, so much exceeded my own,—an aid, too, which, if tendered, would, in all probability, have been rejected with contempt. Still less did I feel inclined to exhibit a supererogatory gallantry in soothing the fears of the apprehensive matron, to whose grinders alarm had already restored the full power of mastication. Aware, as I am, how much my character must suffer in the estimation of my female readers from the confession, I must still honestly avow that I could not find it in my heart to utter one consoling word, or even to assist in quieting the unsavoury "Jacky," who, frightened because he saw his mother frightened, now added his yells to the harmonic combination. Indeed, my only care was to remove myself as far as possible from the sphere of their influence; so, telling the coachman that I would walk forward till he should overtake me, I proceeded leisurely on, not a little pleased at the opportunity thus afforded me of enjoying a small portion of so fine an evening, and feeling, I fear, a malignant pleasure at the retributive sufferings now inflicted on some of those who had so long kept me in purgatory.

I had made but little progress in my walk, and was scarcely clear of Johnny's shrill vociferations, when the same musical and plaintive notes which had attracted my attention previously to the discovery of the accident, again caught my ear.

The sounds were evidently at no great distance from

me, yet seemed to recede as I approached, till, at length, they appeared to become stationary, since I manifestly gained upon them, and could even distinguish a few of the words which my invisible entertainer was singing to a wild but melancholy air. A turn of the road brought me suddenly near the person who was thus, as it seemed, venting his sorrows and complainings to the ear of night, and calling in the aid of harmony to soothe the grief it cannot entirely tranquillize.

It was the tall figure of a man that now dimly met my view; he was enveloped in a large cloak, similar to those then used by the military on service, and since in so much request among our students in law and linendrapery. Its ample folds concealed, in a great measure, the proportions of a form of which only a confused outline could be traced beneath the shadow of a couple of tall trees that skirted the road. I could, however, distinguish that the person, whoever he might be, was of a commanding height, in spite of the unfavourableness of the attitude in which he stood, as he remained, with his back turned towards me, leaning over a gate, and, as I conjectured from the position of his head, gazing earnestly on the brilliant luminary which shone in mild radiance above him.

As I turned the corner of the hedge which had hitherto concealed him from my sight, his song ceased. I paused for a moment as I beheld him, but was again advancing, when the recurrence of the strain checked my footsteps. Apparently absorbed in his own contemplations, he had not perceived my approach, and I was now sufficiently near to distinguish, with tolerable precision, the following couplets, which he sang to the same wild melody that had at first attracted my attention, still seeming to address himself to the shining planet on which his eyes were fixed :—

SONG OF THE NIGHT WANDERER.

There is a low and a lonely vale,
Where the silver moon shines clearly,
And thither I flew to tell my tale
To one whom I loved full dearly;

In jocund glee I bounded along,
And gaily I laugh'd and troll'd my song;
Oh the moon! the lovely moon!
Dearer to me the light of the moon
Than the gaudy blaze of the flaunting noon!

But the days are gone, and years are fled,
Fled too are those hours of brightness;
And the nut-brown curls that waved on my head,
Are tinged with a silvery whiteness;
And gone is one whom I loved full well,
And I heard the hollow passing-bell
As I gazed on the moon, the cold, cold moon!
Yet dearer still is the light of the moon,
Oh! dearer by far than the flaunting noon!

There is a low and a lonely tomb,
Where the grass-green turf is springing,
And the wild flowers shed their sweetest perfume,
And the nightingale's song is singing;
Oh! there lies one whom I mourn in vain,
As I listen to Philomel's dying strain,
And sadly gaze on the pensive moon;—
I seek the moon, the silent moon,
And fly from the gaudy blaze of noon!

The voice of the mourner, for such I was convinced he was, ceased. There was nothing in the words themselves, taken abstractedly, which could confirm the idea which I had begun to entertain, that the unknown was labouring under some serious affection of the mind, more than is to be found in a hundred other ultra-sentimental ditties with which the music-shops are so abundantly supplied; but the tremulous tones in which the song was given, and the deep-drawn sigh, almost amounting to a groan, which followed it, conveyed to my mind an irresistible conviction that it was the offspring of no fictitious grief, but the simple expression of a genuine and heartfelt sorrow.

While I hesitated whether I should accost him or not, being unwilling to let him suppose that I had been playing the part of an eavesdropper, and witnessing effusions which I readily conceived were not intended to meet the ear of any human being, the singer rose from his position, and proceeded slowly on before me, keeping the same track I was myself pursuing.

The lapse of a few seconds brought us nearly on a parallel, when I ventured to give him the usual salutation of a passenger, with a remark on the uncommon beauty of the evening. His reply was courteous, and gave me encouragement, by slackening my steps, to bring my pace to one more in unison with his own, and to commence a desultory sort of conversation.

He was at first brief enough in his replies, eyeing me occasionally with a suspicious glance ; but finding from my discourse that I was simply a traveller who had left the mail behind me, his reserve in a great measure gave way, and he let me understand that he, like myself, was a passenger, and by the same conveyance, but with this difference, that while I rioted (Heaven save the mark !) in all the aristocratical luxury of an inside place, he had contented himself with the humble exaltation,—if I may make use of so paradoxical an expression,—of the roof. Feeling himself a little cramped, he, too, it seemed, had availed himself of the same opportunity to execute a manœuvre similar to the one I had adopted, having descended from his Olympus the moment the coach stopped.

He now began to express his surprise that it had not overtaken him, a circumstance which I accounted for by mentioning the injury which it had sustained by the fracture of the bar (the discovery of which his walking on at once had prevented him from knowing), and thus satisfied him that an apprehension he had begun to entertain, that the coachman might have passed him unobserving and unobserved, was unfounded.

As our conversation continued, I had an opportunity of observing him more narrowly, and was surprised to find that he was by no means so far advanced in life as some expressions in his song had led me to expect : he appeared, indeed, to have scarcely passed the prime of manhood, while the firmness of his tread, and the athletic uprightness of his figure, if they wanted the springing elasticity of youth, were at least equally removed from the enervation of age. As he occasionally raised his head, the moonbeams gave additional wanness to a face

the features of which, though bold and masculine, were regular, but of an ashy paleness. He had the air of one who has seen and suffered much; while the gentlemanly ease of his deportment, and that indescribable something, more easily understood than expressed, which usually marks the manners and demeanour of a military man, announced him a soldier.

Insensibly our conversation from commonplace remarks took a more interesting turn, and a casual allusion having drawn forth an explicit avowal of his profession, the discourse not unnaturally diverged to the various changes and chances of a military life; thence to the different climes and countries through which, in the course of service, it is not unfrequently the soldier's lot to wander.

On all these subjects I found my companion possessed of such information as evinced that, in his progress through life, he had not hurried on with a careless or unobservant eye. The few sentences with which he had at first replied to my observations increased in frequency and length; and as the subject of his profession—its arduous duties, its pleasures, and its cares—came more under our review, the deep dejection under which he had originally appeared to labour softened into an expression of equanimity at times almost rising into cheerfulness. Every succeeding moment I grew more pleased with the manner and sentiments of my new acquaintance; and heartily should I have regretted the arrival of the vehicle which was to convey us to the place of our destination, had I not recollected that it rested with myself to decide whether our interview should be thus abruptly cut short or not.

The rolling of wheels, the pattering of horses' hoofs, in conjunction with the cracking of the coachman's whip and the shrill tantivy of the guard's horn, were now heard at a short distance in our rear, and announced the approaching termination of our walk.

I had, as I have said already, fostered an incipient design of emigration from the interior to the exterior of that "infernal machine;" and I was abundantly confirmed in my intention, when, on its coming up, and the guard tendering me his arm to assist me in resuming the situa-

tion I had quitted, I discovered, through the medium of more senses than one, that a most serious catastrophe had taken place there during my absence.

Master Johnny had, it seems, previously to his introduction into that sepulchre of the living, been tolerably well provisioned for his journey. Independently of a hearty supper on ham and oysters, his pockets had been crammed with a fanciful variety of sweetmeats, and he had been farther furnished forth with a huge plum-cake, which he carried, enveloped in brown paper, on his knees. On this said cake he had commenced a formidable attack before we had reached the first milestone out of London; and as the poor child laboured most heartily in his vocation, by the time we had arrived at the end of the first stage, he had reduced his "Ossa to a wart." An addition so vast, and composed of such discordant materials, to the load with which she was previously encumbered, was a burthen far heavier than Dame Nature chose to bear: the goddess turned restive; and the exertion used by the young gentleman in expressing his tribulation assisting her endeavours, no sooner did the coach "move on" again, than, by a sudden and vigorous effort, she succeeded in disengaging herself from a considerable portion of the weight which oppressed her, transferring the *onus* to the lap of the Quaker in the opposite corner, to the visible discomposure and defilement of his outward man.

The patience of Friend Penn himself could scarcely have withstood so sudden and so severe a trial, much less that of Hezekiah Brimmer, whom Satan seized the opportunity to buffet sorely, and, like a cunning fiend as he is, nearly succeeded, more than once, in forcing an ugly word of malediction beyond the aperture of the good man's lips.

As it was, Hezekiah seized the unlucky culprit with the arm of the flesh, and shook him unmercifully; but this ill-advised measure only served to produce a repetition of the offence, by which, from the different attitude which poor John had been forced to assume, his mamma and the honest tar now became fellow-sufferers. As the guard opened the door, the storm within was at its

height; and it may be questioned whether a greater confusion of tongues was heard in Babel itself within the same number of square feet.

I did not hesitate a moment as to the course to be pursued, but, bidding the man close the door, sprang up the side of the carriage, and placed myself by my late companion, who had already re-occupied his seat. Half a crown to the coachman procured me the loan of a supernumerary surtout, well calculated to keep out the night-air; and, thus caparisoned, I felt myself in an absolute Paradise compared with the Tartarus now immediately below me. If I might judge by the satisfaction he expressed, the arrangement was not less agreeable to my fellow-traveller than to myself: he was still, indeed, at times pensive and abstracted; but his conversation, though of a grave and sombre cast, possessed an undefined charm that continued to amuse and interest me exceedingly.

I know not how it happened that our discourse, which had hitherto been confined principally to the manners, customs, and habits of foreign nations, as compared with or distinguished from our own, now turned insensibly upon their superstitions. The Brownie of Scotland,—the Obi of the Negroes,—the Hungarian Vampire,—the German Rubezahl,—and even the now nearly subverted empire of the Fairies in our own country—all came by turns under our review.

It was not till the famous and inexhaustible subject of ghosts became our theme that the slightest discordance of opinion existed between us; but when this celebrated topic came at last upon the tapis, I could not but perceive an evident and decided reluctance in my companion to enter upon the discussion. The levity with which I at first treated the notion of a visit from the dead to the living seemed,—I could not imagine why,—to displease him: his answers to my remarks, if not absolutely petulant, were delivered in a tone by no means consonant with that urbanity and self-possession which he had up to this moment invariably maintained. His constrained replies ended at length in a pause of more than common duration.

In the mean time the singular stillness and brilliancy of the night, the countless myriads of burning stars that gemmed the dark-blue heavens above us, the mild and mellow lustre that prevailed, interrupted only by the momentary coruscations of some transient meteor, numbers of which, like stars darting from their spheres, occasionally shed a gleam of surpassing radiance as they winged their way across the expanse,—the finely-contrasted shades of the brown woods which clothed on either hand a sort of defile, at the entrance of which we had now arrived, and up whose steep ascent our conductor allowed his horses to proceed at an easier pace,—all,—the whole scene, which developed Nature in her most captivating state of tranquil majesty,—so enchanted me, that, with the subject we had been discussing fresh in my mind, I could not forbear exclaiming, in the words of the poet,—

> "How sweet and solemn is this midnight scene!
> At such an hour as this,—in such a spot,—
> If ancestry can be in aught believed,
> Descending spirits have conversed with man,
> And told the secrets of the world unknown!"

My companion shuddered as I pronounced the last two lines, and fixed his gaze alternately on the woods that hemmed us in on either side, as if he indeed expected to behold some supernatural visitant issue from their deep recesses. The wild expression of his countenance was altogether so remarkable, that I could not avoid taking notice of it.

"Really, sir," I continued, laughing, "I could almost persuade myself that you had indeed resolved to give that credence to our worthy ancestors on this formidable subject which their unbelieving posterity seem determined to refuse them."

"And why should I not?" returned he, in a voice serious even to sadness, and betraying, as I imagined, some slight token of displeasure; "what is there so absurd in the idea that the disembodied spirit should yet desire to linger among the scenes it has delighted in, or joy to

watch over and protect the happiness of those whom it has loved?"

"Absurd?—nay, I do not go the length of pronouncing the idea absurd;—the theory, on the contrary, is a mighty pretty one, and at times I am almost tempted to regret that it rests on so unsubstantial a foundation. For my own part I should desire nothing better than to discover the ghost of some good-natured grandmother occasionally at my elbow, with sage hints for the better conducting of my life and manners;—or some maiden aunt, of a dozen generations' standing, extending her long and bony finger to intimate where I might replenish an exhausted exchequer by the discovery of some recondite pot of money."

The voice of my companion assumed additional sternness as he replied—"These, and silly tales like these, the foolish inventions of boys and idiots, the babblings of nurses, and the visionary dreams of mercenary blockheads, eager in believing what they earnestly wish for—these they are that have thrown suspicion on the actual visits of immortal beings, undertaken for far higher purposes, and with far nobler designs than the pointing out a few ounces of sordid dross, or with the still more contemptible view of exciting causeless terror in beings so infinitely below their purified nature. These are the tales which the careless and the vain mix up, and associate in their imagination with recorded facts of a more dignified description,—facts to the authenticity of which some of the wisest and best of men have borne testimony in all ages of the world."

"I am fully aware," rejoined I, "that many of the narratives you allude to appear to rest upon no mean authority; that Plutarch, for instance, has given us several, while, in more modern times, the comprehensive mind of that 'giant in intellect,' our own Johnson, was deeply imbued with a similar persuasion; yet, nevertheless I cannot help imputing the whole system, which has obtained from the darker ages down to our more enlightened days, either to successful imposture, or to the effects of a strong imagination operating upon weak nerves.

That many of these traditionary anecdotes were firmly believed by the persons who have handed them down, and even by some who were actors in the scenes described, I entertain no doubt; still I am not a whit the nearer giving my assent to the actual appearance of any one spectre, from that of Cæsar down to the scarcely less celebrated one of Sir George Villiers, or Mrs. Veal with her 'rustling silk gown.'"

"And on what is this disbelief founded? You doubtless admit that Providence governs the world by general laws; what is there, then, ridiculous in supposing that those laws may be occasionally dispensed with—if, indeed, they can be said to be dispensed with at all, for we positively know nothing of their constitutions,—when the high and inscrutable purposes of Heaven require it?—when the detection of secret guilt, or the punishment of open villany, demand its interference?"

"Well," cried I, in the same tone which I had maintained throughout the whole conversation, "on occasions of such moment as those to which you allude, still less should I wish to deny myself to any deceased gentleman or lady who might think proper to favour me with a call. The redressing of wrong and the re-establishing of right is a glorious task, and, with a ghost to back one, and take all the responsibility upon itself, must be especially delightful; I really could almost wish I might be selected by some aërial avenger for so very respectable an office."

"Now, Heaven in its mercy forbid!" exclaimed he, with a wild energy that made me start,—then clasping his hand, which still quivered with some strong emotion, "You know not what you are asking;—rash and unthinking young man, bitterly would you rue the hour should your mad wish be granted!"

His whole frame shook with agitation,—his eyes glistened in the moonlight with an unnatural brightness, and his tones sank into even sepulchral hoarseness, as he continued—"No! Heaven forbid that another wretch should suffer the torments which have been mine since first this dreadful commission was enjoined me!"

He paused, and, unclasping his hands, covered with them the whole of his countenance.

During the latter part of his ejaculation he had appeared to have become totally unconscious of my presence; and the strange import of the words he had used, together with the violent agitation which assailed him, combined to give strength to an opinion I had before begun to form, that the intellects of my new acquaintance were, on this point at least, not altogether unclouded. True, that on every other subject his conversation had been of a superior description;—that he had diffused, with no sparing hand, much valuable information, chastened by a correctness of thinking, a genuine taste and elegance of expression, that evinced the richness and cultivation of his mind: still I was quite aware that among the melancholy victims of mental aberration, such circumstances are by no means uncommon; that, in numerous instances, the fatal malady lies dormant and unsuspected, till some one preconceived and rooted idea, which has warped the imagination, is accidentally called into play, and succeeds, for a time, in driving reason from her throne.

Such, I now began to be apprehensive, might be the unhappy condition of my fellow-traveller, when, his emotion having at length in some degree subsided, I ventured to direct his attention to the faint streak of golden light that now marked the extremity of the horizon, as the gray tints of morning succeeded the darker shadows of a night fast hastening to its close.

But my hopes of thus diverting his thoughts from what, I felt convinced, was a subject of pain and distress to him, proved abortive. In vain did I point out to his observation the beauties of the surrounding landscape, which every moment rendered more distinct;—in vain did the mounting skylark welcome with his cheerful notes the first beam of the rising sun, that glittered on his little breast, while all below lay yet unconscious of its cheering influence;—in vain did vegetation, redolent of sweetness, convey to the charmed sense the choicest perfume;—wrapt in a melancholy gloom, he appeared dead to the charms of Nature that surrounded him, while the few replies,

which I at times succeeded in eliciting, were so cold and constrained, and were pronounced with an air so *distrait*, that I at length ceased to importune him by remarks, which only seemed to annoy him, and, turning my thoughts inward for the remainder of the journey, became insensibly almost as abstracted as himself.

My cogitations, it must be confessed, were by no means of an agreeable nature. Wounded in every feeling by the unaccountable conduct of Lord Manningham, I would have given worlds for power to banish him and his lovely daughter from my recollection, and to have "left them to their pride;" but this I found myself utterly incapable of performing; my chains were too securely riveted to be so easily shaken off; I loved with all the intensity of a young and first passion; and as I recalled to mind the pleasing thought that she at least had given me no offence, hope failed not to whisper that the behaviour of her father,—if indeed it had ever reached her knowledge,—must be viewed by her with the same disapprobation as it was by myself.

Youth is naturally vain and sanguine, and I flattered myself that the time spent in her company at the theatre had not been thrown away,—though what on earth could have taken her into that part of it, so accompanied, was a mystery beyond my power to solve. If I had read the language of her expressive eyes aright, the *penchant* had been reciprocal; and as this delightful idea took possession of my imagination, the remembrance of his lordship's strange harshness comparatively faded from my mind. I began to rack my invention to furnish excuses for his conduct; an eager desire laid hold upon me to unravel the mistake which I became more and more convinced must have taken place, and to receive the apologies which, at the *dénouement*, he would undoubtedly tender to my acceptance with no small confusion of face.

I was roused from my reverie by a circumstance which threatened utterly to subvert all my castle-building in the very outset; this was no other than the overturning of the coach, and my consequent descent in a narrow but rapid stream, that ran beneath a bridge, on the centre of which we were when the accident occurred.

What was the immediate cause of our sudden descent is more than I am able to state;—whether the tackling and cordage, so plentifully lavished by "Bill" upon the fractured splinter-bar, had given way, in spite of all the combined science of himself and honest Jack,—or whether any other part of the machinery had been equally unsound, I cannot say;—all I know is, that I found myself in a moment up to my neck in the river.

Of all sublunary applications there is, perhaps, not one which possesses greater efficacy in a love case than that of a good sousing in cold water;—if its effects fail to be permanent, they at least give the fit a complete check for the time; and in cases where a radical cure is out of the question, that is no trifling point gained. Heaven is my witness—I confess it with shame—that for a full hour after my ducking, I thought no more of Amelia Stafford than I did of the Lady Godiva.

Notwithstanding the impediment thrown in my way by my borrowed "Upper Benjamin," I was not long in regaining the bank. The coachman I found already upon his legs: he had fallen against the parapet of the bridge, which, at the expense of a pretty severe bruise, had prevented his going over. The same parapet had also saved the carriage itself from being dashed upon the ground: it rested against its edge; and though the shock was severe, the occupants of the interior of the coach were, through this fortunate interposition, much more alarmed than injured. They were relieved from the awkwardness of their recumbent position, without much difficulty, by the assistance of the guard, who, clinging to the iron-work of his seat, had escaped being thrown off at all.

It was not till the lapse of a few seconds had enabled me to recover from the confusion I had fallen into from the united effects of the tumble, and of the quantity of cold water which I had unwillingly swallowed, that I missed my companion.

He was not on the bridge; he was nowhere to be seen. I rushed back to the spot where I had contrived to scramble out of the water, and, as I cast a hurried glance down the river, saw one of his arms rise above the surface,

at some distance down the current, which was bearing him rapidly away.

I flew rather than ran along the bank, till I arrived opposite the spot where I could behold him faintly struggling to disencumber himself of the cloak, which impeded all his efforts, and would have reduced him, in a very few minutes more, to a similar condition with those immaterial beings for whose "revisiting the glimpses of the moon" he had shown himself so sturdy a stickler. If, however, his cloak had hitherto occasioned his danger, it now served as an instrument of release from his perilous position, as the firm grasp which I was enabled to take of it conduced not a little to his preservation.

When I had succeeded in dragging him up the bank, he was so completely exhausted as to be incapable of supporting himself, and indeed was scarcely sensible of his situation; but by degrees his recollection, as well as some portion of his energy, returned, and he was at length able, with the assistance of my arm, to regain the high road.

The place where this disaster had befallen us was fortunately just at the entrance of a considerable village, the inhabitants of which had, from no great distance, witnessed our mishap, and now came running down to offer their aid, and ask questions. These, in our present dripping condition, I felt very little inclined to answer; so, cutting short a long string of interrogatories, such as "Whether the gentleman was much hurt?" "Whether we had been in the water?"—a fact no human looker-on could possibly doubt for an instant,—and others of a similar cast, I proceeded, with as much expedition as the weakened state of my *protégé* would admit, to where a tall sign-post exposed to view the Kit-Cat effigy of a gentleman with an iron cuirass and a bald head, which the neighbourhood had agreed, in courtesy to the landlord, to consider a striking likeness of the Marquis of Granby.

"Whoe'er has travell'd life's dull round,
Where'er his various course has been,
May sigh to think how oft he found
His warmest welcome at an inn!"

So says Shenstone; and for my own part, I am little inclined to dispute the truth of the poet's axiom. On this occasion, especially, the round and ruby-coloured face of our good-humoured landlady, Mrs. Blenkinsop, already shining with all the radiance of a well-scrubbed mahogany table, exhibited tenfold lustre as she welcomed us into a snug little room behind the bar.

This "shady, blest retreat" was furnished with a variety of huge case-bottles, that promised much of comfort, and disclosed besides to our enraptured gaze the still more cheering prospect of a blazing fire—to persons in our predicament, perhaps, the greatest desideratum on earth.

It was in vain that I requested my companion to retire to bed; nor were the assurances of Mrs. Blenkinsop that "her beds were well aired, and good enough for a lord to lie on," of more avail: he persisted in his refusal, declaring that a tumbler of mulled port, and a change of dress, were all that was requisite to the restoration of his comfort. I thought otherwise; but he was deaf to persuasion, and, like most obstinate people, carried his point. The wine, by our landlady's assistance, was soon procured; and under the same auspices a lad was despatched to the fractured vehicle for our baggage.

The Marquis of Granby, whose hospitable walls now afforded us an asylum, was, I well knew, in point of distance, scarcely more than twelve miles from Underdown; and as, now that the disarrangement which my person had undergone, inside as well as out, was tolerably rectified, I found myself very little, if at all, the worse for my aquatic adventure, I requested mine hostess, who was evidently lady of the ascendant, to inform me if her hotel, among its other excellences, could afford the luxury of a postchaise.

In fact, I did not feel by any means inclined to trust my neck farther to a conveyance organized of such frail materials as woful experience had convinced me the one from which I had so nearly met the fate of Phaeton was composed of; nor should I have repeated the experiment, even had the delay I must have submitted to during the

necessary repairs been out of the question. With a multiplicity of courtesies, each succeeding one lower than the former, the good-natured little woman assured me that I could be accommodated with "a very elegant" one, the unoccupied corner of which I frankly offered to my new acquaintance, who was, I found, as desirous as myself of proceeding with all convenient despatch. At the same time I assured him, that if the urgency of his affairs would allow him to accept the hospitality of the Hall, I could venture, in the absence of my worthy uncle, its proprietor, to assure him a cordial welcome from my mother; adding, with more of levity than caution, that "a renowned ancestor of mine, one Sir Roger de Bullwinkle, who was said nightly to perambulate the mansion armed cap-a-pie, might possibly furnish him with an additional argument in favour of his theory of Ghosts and Goblins."

The words had hardly escaped my lips when the change in his countenance showed me that I had been wrong in hazarding this ill-timed pleasantry. When I named the redoubted Roger, he recoiled with a shuddering earnestness, as if he had been about to tread upon a viper; and his eyes gleamed with an expression almost amounting to ferocity. His nether lip quivered with suppressed emotion, and his voice faltered, as, after a brief pause, he indistinctly declined a proposal which, from the smile that had lit up his countenance at its commencement, I had made myself certain he would have accepted.

Heartily vexed with myself at my want of consideration, I apologized for the allusion, and again pressed him to accompany me. He continued, however, firm in his refusal, while he shook his head mournfully, and, as it now seemed to me, "more in sorrow than in anger," telling me that he began to fear he had indeed overrated his strength when he proposed continuing his journey so soon,—that he should therefore give up the idea, and seek such repose as his pillow might afford him.

I was not less pleased than surprised at this determination, as I really thought a good warm bed and medical attendance most fitting, by far, for a person who had suffered from remaining in the water so long as he had

done; I no longer, therefore, endeavoured to shake his resolution, but contented myself with pressing him earnestly to favour me with a visit before he quitted that part of the country.

With an air and look solemn even to dejection, he promised that he "*would* see me again;" and, taking up my valise, which I had thrown carelessly upon the table, handed it to the multifarious personage who, in the several capacities of boots, waiter, ostler, and occasionally chambermaid, was minister for the home department at the Granby's Head.

Before he altogether relinquished it to the grasp of the aforesaid functionary, his eye rested upon the brass plate which occupied its centre.

"Charles Stafford, Esq.," read he. "That, then, is the name of my preserver?"

"Of your fellow-passenger," returned I, as, giving up the valise to the man who placed it in the chaise, he took my hand—"Of your fellow-passenger, and of one who hopes soon to see you perfectly recovered from the effects of a ducking which he would have been glad to have prevented altogether."

I had one foot upon the step of the chaise,—Mister Boots was holding open the door and gazing on me with glances, sharpened by expectation; my mysterious companion wrung my hand strongly,—"Adieu!" uttered he, in an agitated tone,—"adieu! young gentleman, and may Heaven grant that you may never have reason to curse bitterly the hour in which you drew me from the stream!"

He turned abruptly from me, and the postboy, cracking his whip, set off in a canter towards Underdown, before I had half recovered from the surprise which my new friend's strange adjuration had thrown me into.

CHAPTER XIV.

Home! home!—Sweet, sweet home!
There's no place like ho-ome!
There's no place like home!

BISHOP.

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd?
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the foul bosom of that perilous stuff
That weighs upon the heart?

Macbeth in Trouble.

A RETURN.—AN INVALID.—A SNUBBING.—A CHARGE.—A CALLING IN.—A CALLING OUT.

LITTLE more than an hour had elapsed when the tall chimneys of the Hall,—which, like most of those belonging to buildings of the same era, towered high above its slanting roofs and gable ends,—appeared, rising over the summits of the lofty trees that embosomed the edifice, and giving to it, when viewed from a distance, almost the air of a castellated mansion.

There is a something in the return to our home, however short the period of our absence from it may have been, which always produces a kindly and complacent feeling in our bosoms; and this feeling acquires tenfold strength when we know that the roof we are revisiting contains beneath it hearts which will throb at our arrival with sensations responsive to our own. In spite of the unpleasant and irritating circumstances which had occasioned my unexpected return, I could not help experiencing this genial glow, as the chaise, issuing from the long avenue of sturdy oaks,—the scene of my Cousin Nicholas's early achievements in the art of horsemanship,—drew up to the steps which led to the antique portal, over whose high and pointed arch the "three golden fetterlocks" of the Bullwinkles stood forth in strong relief.

The current of my ideas underwent a sudden and immediate revulsion as the venerable butler presented himself to receive me. The subdued alacrity, the sober energy of manner, with which this ancient retainer of the family was wont to welcome home any of its members, had sunk into an appearance of sadness and depression. As I hastily sprang past the inferior domestic who opened the chaise-door for me, I saw at once that some calamity was impending over the house, and had occasioned this unwonted gravity in the most attached of its dependents. Sir Oliver was absent;—my mother, then, was ill—was dead!

A cold shudder ran through my veins as the dreadful idea presented itself to my imagination; and I experienced a degree of relief amounting to thankfulness when I found that my fears were not verified in their fullest extent, although but too sufficient reason remained for apprehension.

Mrs. Stafford had indeed been seized with sudden indisposition a few days before my arrival, on perusing a letter which she had received from London, the contents of which had evidently created in her no slight degree of agitation.

Her illness had at first excited much alarm, but, as it was now hoped, had taken a favourable turn. She had expressed a strong desire to see her son, and had requested that I might be summoned as soon as possible. An express had accordingly been got ready, but was countermanded afterwards by her own positive orders, since which she had sunk into a kind of apathetic lethargy, the more unaccountable inasmuch as the first approaches of her disorder had been attended by symptoms of so different and so much more violent a nature.

Such was the account imparted to me by Jennings as I entered the vestibule; and I had no reason either to doubt the accuracy of his intelligence, or to be for one moment at a loss to divine the cause which had produced so lamentable an effect.

I have already said that a strong affection for my mother was one of the most rooted principles of my

nature; it was entwined with the very fibres of my heart; and a degree of bitterness, greater than I had supposed it possible for any circumstance to have originated in my mind towards a human being, now swelled my bosom against Lord Manningham, and almost rose to my lips in curses.

That "the letter," the perusal of which had thus affected my mother, was of his lordship's inditing, I could not entertain a doubt; that it contained some tale —a tale so dreadful to a fond parent's ear—of a loved son's disgrace, was still less to be questioned; and as the events of the week gone by, which Miss Stafford's beauty had partly succeeded in banishing from my mind, now rushed in irresistible strength upon my recollection, deeply as I felt the indignity I had sustained, a thousand times more deeply did I resent the sufferings inflicted by it upon my beloved parent.

The good old Jennings, who observed the emotions I so plainly exhibited, opened the door of the breakfast-parlour, and respectfully followed me into it. He seemed affected by my distress; nevertheless, through the habitual deference which the faithful fellow preserved towards me, I could not but perceive a degree of constraint, and a reserve of manner, which told me, quite as plain as words could have done, that, in his opinion, my own conduct had drawn down this visitation upon me, and that to it only had I to look for a solution of the cause of my mother's indisposition.

With this man I had been a favourite from a child. From the first hour in which I had been introduced at the Hall, Jennings had exhibited, in a thousand ways, the preference with which he had distinguished me above his young master—a preference which grew only the more obvious as we advanced in years, and which doubtless derived its origin from the love and respect he, in common with all the old domestics, had ever entertained for my mother, whose secession from her paternal roof they had seen with feelings of regret, little alleviated by the conduct of her successor, Lady Nelly. Of all the servants of the family who had witnessed her abdication, Jennings

alone had remained to hail her re-establishment, and had, in fact, from his known and tried attachment, been considered, both by her and myself, rather in the light of an humble friend than of a common menial.

Conscious as I was of the falsehood of the charge which his sorrowful and penetrating look seemed to impute to me, my spirit rose against the fancied accusation, and with an air of infinitely greater *hauteur* than I had ever before exhibited towards him, or any other domestic, I ordered him to let Mrs. Stafford be informed of my arrival, and of my wish to be admitted immediately to her presence.

"Ah, Master Charles!" replied the old man, mournfully shaking his hoary head as he retired, while an unbidden tear seemed starting from his eye. "But I shall do your bidding, sir."

He closed the door slowly, and, as I thought, reluctantly, behind him;—a pang of self-disapprobation seized upon me as it shut him from my view, and I half moved forward to retract my petulance, and dismiss him with a kindlier greeting. The thought unavoidably occurred, Why did I feel offended with him? Whence arose that mild dejection of his furrowed countenance which I had construed into unmerited upbraiding? Whence but from the regard he bore to my mother, and—why should I deny it?—to myself. Still, the consciousness that it was unmerited restrained me, and checked the impulse which inclined me to follow him.

In a few minutes, which were passed by me in the utmost anxiety, and which appeared to my impatience prolonged to as many hours, he returned.

"Mrs. Stafford was asleep."

Unable to remain longer by myself in such an annoying state of suspense, I walked hastily towards the staircase, extending my hand to Jennings as I passed. The old man took it reverently, and would have raised it to his lips, but, with a cordial pressure that bespoke my compunction for having treated him with unwonted harshness, I released it from his grasp, and directed my steps to the apartment of my mother.

A silence still and solemn as that of death reigned throughout the room, while the half-closed shutters and shadowing curtains, that admitted but a few faint rays of light, contributed not a little to the gloom of the scene.

I advanced to the foot of the bed, and gazed upon my mother. She was wrapped in slumber, but her sleep seemed ever and anon disturbed; and the frequent contraction of her brow, as a deep-drawn sigh or a few broken and unconnected words occasionally escaped her, announced that all was not at peace within. At such moments her favourite attendant Martha, who with Miss Pyefinch watched her pillow on opposite sides, would rise and look anxiously at her pale countenance, the snowy hue of which was only invaded by a small spot of vivid red that marked the centre of each cheek, and exhibited to the view a hectic glow as dangerous as it was beautiful. But her affectionate gaze was met by no answering glance: my mother still reposed,—if repose that could be called, when the restless and variable expression of her features showed that her mind, at least, was far from enjoying tranquillity. She was indeed much altered since I had seen her last; and I trembled with newly-awakened apprehension as the idea took possession of me, that a short, a very short, period might deprive me of my only parent.

Finding it impossible to suppress my emotion, and warned by the impressive gestures of her attendants that the uncontrolled ebullition of my feelings might disturb and arouse her, I quitted the room as silently as I had entered it, but with a heavy heart. Miss Pyefinch followed, and, in her way, endeavoured to offer me consolation. Notwithstanding her eccentricity, and some other points in her character which might perhaps have been altered to advantage, she was not a bad-hearted woman in the main. I verily believe she participated in the sorrow into which she beheld me plunged, and would have done anything in her power to have alleviated it; but her endeavours were far better in the intent than the execution; and at length I, not without difficulty, succeeded in persuading her to leave me to myself, after

she had given me all the information in her power to communicate respecting the commencement of this alarming accession to my mother's malady; her information, however, amounted to little more than I had previously gathered from the relation of the honest Jennings.

After more than half an hour, spent in a state the irksomeness of which may be easily imagined, I was favoured with a communication from Dr. Drench, who had arrived to visit his patient. The information he gave me contributed not a little to re-assure me, as he said he found her much better than from her appearance at his last visit he had dared to anticipate. She had awakened from her slumber while he was in the room, and had evidently derived much benefit and refreshment from it: the fever, which had heretofore raged in her veins, had undergone a material reduction. Still he recommended that the greatest caution should be observed, to prevent anything from reaching her which might at all tend to produce a return of the agitation which had before so sensibly affected her, and even advised that the circumstance of my having arrived should, for the present at least, be kept from her knowledge. To this arrangement, however, I positively refused my consent; and finding that my perseverance (obstinacy, he called it) was not to be overcome, he at last yielded, though with a very bad grace, and a stipulation that, if it must be so, the communication should at all events be made by himself, while the interview should terminate the moment he should pronounce it necessary.

To this proposal I unhesitatingly assented, and saw him depart to execute his self-imposed commission, with a much greater degree of satisfaction than a few short minutes since I had thought it possible for me to experience.

To do the worthy dispenser of chemicals and galenicals justice, he acquitted himself of his task with much ability, and was pleased to find, when he had imparted his news in a manner as little abrupt as might be, that his patient seemed to derive much satisfaction from the intelligence, and even intimated a desire that I should be at once conducted to her presence.

For the first time in our lives my mother received me with a cold look and an averted eye. I sensibly felt her displeasure, but refrained from noticing it, lest the conversation, which my so doing would inevitably lead to, should transgress the bounds prescribed by the doctor.

Our interview, thus restricted, was brief and unsatisfactory to both parties; but before I quitted the room, as I affectionately kissed her cheek—a salute which she received, but condescended not to return—I could not forbear whispering that I had no doubt of being able to convince her that my conduct had been shamefully misrepresented, whenever she should be sufficiently recovered to listen to my vindication. Tears filled her eyes as she shook her head doubtingly, but I was delighted to find that she could not refrain from giving the hand that had taken her's a half-reluctant pressure,—when Drench, who was narrowly watching us, suspecting that we were infringing upon the terms on which he had allowed my introduction to the sick-room, broke in abruptly, and put an end to the conference by hurrying me along with him downstairs.

Impatient and anxious as I naturally was to ascertain the specific nature of the faults laid to my charge, I was compelled for the present to repress my curiosity, as Mrs. Stafford had not communicated the contents of the letter she had received to any one, although, from the language which had unwittingly escaped her, no one entertained the slightest doubt that it contained some story of my delinquency or disgrace. She had never parted with it, but, as I learned on inquiry from Miss Kitty, it still rested beneath her pillow, from which situation she had directed that it should not be removed.

On the following morning I rose early, and heard with delight that she had passed a much more tranquil night than she had hitherto done since her seizure; but my request to be admitted to see her was met by a decided negative from herself, until I should have perused a letter which she had commissioned Miss Pyefinch to deliver to me. The appearance of the packet, which was enclosed in a sealed envelope, and addressed to me in her own

handwriting, satisfied me that it contained the mischievous epistle which had occasioned her illness. I was not mistaken; the letter was, moreover, as I had rightly anticipated, from Lord Manningham, and ran as follows:—

"My Dear Sister,—It is with no common feelings that I address you, upon a subject as painful to me as I know it will be distressing to yourself; nor is it without the greatest reluctance that I find myself compelled to inflict upon a parent's heart so severe a wound as that which cannot but be caused by the story of the disgraceful conduct of a son. When I add that my own hopes are blighted, and the long-cherished project nearest my heart is, by the same conduct, frustrated and destroyed, I need scarcely say that my grief and disappointment are hardly inferior to your own.

"From that fatal moment when my Amelia became the sole object left to which I could direct my parental affection, it was my most fervent wish that the son of my lamented Charles might be the person to secure her that happiness which I would not allow myself to doubt he would be found worthy to share; and I had pictured to myself the pleasing prospect of witnessing their felicity, and growing old amidst the children of two beings the nearest and dearest to me in the world—judge then of my disappointment when I find myself compelled to renounce this first object of my hopes and prayers, while the painful conviction is forced upon me, that to secure the happiness of my child I must seek in some other family for that worth, integrity, and honour which I had fondly flattered myself I should have discovered in my own.

"On my arrival in this country, I addressed, as you cannot but remember, a letter to yourself, in which I candidly stated my wishes, and was highly gratified to find that yours so entirely coincided with them. If, on the subsequent visit of my nephew, I was not so much struck with the graces of his figure as, from your truly maternal description, I had expected to be, mere personal advantages,—though I would not be thought to undervalue them,—weigh so little with me, that, had his mental

qualifications but stood the test, I could gladly have compounded for a much smaller share of external grace than a mother's partiality would naturally invest him with. But this, I lament to say, has not been the case.

"At their first interview in Grosvenor-square, I perceived that my daughter and my nephew were by no means such absolute strangers to each other as I had imagined; though I am fully persuaded that Amelia, at least, was not aware of their affinity when chance threw them into each other's company at one of the theatres.

"It was not without considerable surprise as well as displeasure, I now learned that during the time which on my first arrival I had inevitably dedicated to the discharge of official duties, my daughter, weary of a solitude to which she was unaccustomed, and dotingly fond of music, had prevailed upon Wilkinson, whose affection, I verily believe, could deny her nothing, to take advantage of my unavoidable absence at the Colonial Office, and to accompany her to hear an oratorio *incog.* This mad-brained plan a sister of the latter, who resides somewhere about St. James's, enabled her to execute, without even my servants suspecting that they had anything in view beyond a visit to Mrs. Morgan.

"On this occasion, it seems, Amelia first encountered her cousin, who then received, as he asserted, so strong an impression as to be absolutely overwhelmed with joy, when, on calling to present your introductory letter, he discovered his unknown charmer in his cousin. Of the truth of this his statement, however, I could not help having my doubts, and was indeed soon convinced that, prior to his presenting himself at my house, he was perfectly aware of her identity with the lady whom he had so casually encountered.

"This little piece of disingenuousness certainly did not tend to raise him in my estimation; still, though far from pleased with any part of the transaction, I saw nothing absolutely wrong in the thoughtless frolic, and was more disposed to blame Wilkinson than anybody else, as she ought to have known better than to indulge Amelia in such a freak.

"The second day after his arrival I had resolved to dedicate to the study of my young relative's character, and, aware that the real disposition is usually most apt to exhibit itself in society, invited a few friends, whose refined manners and enlightened conversation were calculated to draw forth any hidden resources of intellect, natural or acquired, which diffidence in the probationer, or lack of opportunity from the absence of mental collision, might suffer to remain concealed. Heartily did I repent the experiment, and deeply indeed did I blush for my *protégé*, on hearing him noisily and rudely interrupt every subject broached by boisterous and vulgar jokes, which increased in frequency and coarseness as the inebriety into which he was fast plunging became more conspicuous. My interference, when I was at last compelled to employ it, he seemed much inclined to set at defiance; and it was with difficulty that I could prevent his exhibiting himself in so disgraceful a condition to my daughter.

"I will not enlarge upon the mortification I experienced at having it witnessed by my friends.

"The following morning—or rather noon, for till that hour did the effects of the orgies of the preceding evening confine him to his chamber,—I requested his attendance in my study, and remonstrating with him on his behaviour, forcibly perhaps, but, I trust, without harshness, I stated at the same time most unequivocally my resolution never to bestow my daughter on a drunkard. He apologized with a very bad grace, and with much more, as I thought, of sullenness than penitence, when I left him alone with Amelia, while I acquitted myself of an indispensable engagement.

"I will not, my dearest sister, unnecessarily aggravate your distress by dwelling on the faults and follies which every succeeding hour developed during the whole of his short visit; it will be sufficient to inform you, that—rightly conjecturing, as I imagine, from the disapprobation which I now strongly and repeatedly expressed of his conduct, that my intentions in his favour had undergone a material alteration,—he endeavoured to ascertain

whether Amelia might not prove more accessible, and not only strove to prevail on her to consent to an elopement, but on her indignant refusal, actually formed a plan, as silly in conception as atrocious in design, for carrying her off to Scotland, with or without her inclination"——

I had read thus far in my uncle's long epistle, with much such sensations as a man experiences when, half-awakened from a confused and heterogeneous dream, he feels his faculties bewildered with the strange images yet before his eyes, and is scarcely conscious even of his own identity: but if thus far the letter were calculated to amaze and confound, the remainder was even still more inexplicable. Lord Manningham proceeded thus:—

"In pursuance of this ridiculous scheme, he induced her to accompany him for a short drive in a curricle which I had placed at his disposal, attended only by a single groom newly taken into my service;—this man he had, for pecuniary considerations no doubt, contrived to attach to his interests.

"They took the North road, but it was not till some time after they had surmounted Highgate Hill that my daughter entertained any suspicion of his intention. His declining to comply with her request that he would return, and the sudden absence of the servant, who, on some trivial pretence, had ridden forward, now first insinuated into her mind an apprehension of treachery. By no means intimidated, however, and finding all resistance for the present useless, she remained perfectly passive, and quietly listened to the strange farrago of nonsense with which her companion now thought proper to entertain her. His vows and protestations, &c., were couched in the highest style of the mock heroic; he attributed his conduct to the overwhelming force of his affection, and his despair of securing my consent to their immediate union, adding that the violence of his passion would brook no long delay, and expressing his confidence that, their marriage once completed, my forgiveness of this rash step would be the almost immediate consequence. With these and similar rhapsodies, alternately threatening and entreating, he con-

veyed her as far as St. Alban's, where at the inn-door she perceived James, the servant who had preceded them, in conversation with a couple of post-boys, who stood ready to mount their horses, four of which were harnessed to a hack chaise.

"Mr. Stafford assisted my Amelia to alight, and was preparing to accompany her into the house, when his intention was apparently altered by some communication which his worthy coadjutor whispered in his ear; he paused and led the way directly to the chaise, the door of which he in an authoritative tone commanded the driver to open.

"But secret as James's hint was intended to be, a sound most grateful to her ear had caught the attention of Amelia, and the words "Major Fortescue in the house," distinctly heard, in spite of the lowered voice in which they were pronounced, decided her mode of proceeding.

"Suddenly disengaging her arm from that of her would-be bridegroom, she darted into the passage, calling aloud on the name of him who would, as she well knew, prove both an efficient and respectable protector. Her appeal was not unheard; a door opened, and the dear friend who, but for an event too mournful for me to do more than allude to, would have been connected with us by the closest ties, sprang forward to save the sister of her who, even in her grave, still maintains an undivided empire over him.

"It is needless to say, that the protection Amelia claimed from one of her oldest favourites was unhesitatingly granted, and that Fortescue hastened out to confront the author of this ridiculous abduction; but the latter had no doubt witnessed the recognition, and, finding that the game was up, had disappeared with his rascally abettor in the chaise which they had destined for a different purpose. When my friend reached the street, the vehicle was nearly out of sight on the road back to London.

"Amelia's nerves are fortunately pretty strong; though astonished at the folly, and vexed at the persevering effrontery of her cousin in this precious scheme, she had

never for one instant entertained any alarm, nor doubted its ultimate failure; any little hurry of spirits, therefore, she might experience, ought perhaps to be attributed as much to her unexpected meeting with Eustace as to the strange occurrence which produced their rencontre. Such, at least, she assures me, is the case, and adds, that her forced march had by no means spoiled her appetite, so that, after partaking of a pretty substantial luncheon while my horses were taking their bait, she accompanied Fortescue back in the abandoned curricle. Fortunately I had been detained unusually late at a diplomatic meeting, and the anxiety I underwent on my return home, at discovering Amelia's absence, was of no long duration.

"Neither of the actors in this blessed stratagem have as yet thought proper to make their appearance here, nor do I think it likely that they will, as James's clothes, &c., have, I find, been, for some days past, removed from the house, a fact which convinces me that the plan was not adopted hastily, or without reflection. Indeed, from part of a conversation I had overheard between them as I entered Mr. Stafford's room on the morning after his debauch, I feel satisfied that your son had, at a very early period, meditated the securing himself an interest among my domestics; the door, on that occasion, was ajar, and as I approached I had distinctly heard him offering money to the servant in attendance on him, whom I now recollect to have been this very James, though what his object was I could not then distinguish. The impression upon my mind at the time was, that he was endeavouring to purchase silence as to the extent of his intoxication; I now think differently, and am persuaded that he was even then tampering with his fidelity, in the hope of securing so trustworthy an aide-de-camp.

"This, my dearest sister, is the unpleasant intelligence I have been compelled to communicate; and I trust that in relinquishing, as I now reluctantly do, all hope of a nearer connection being formed between us, you will do me the justice to believe, that necessity alone dictates my resolution, and prevents my risking the tem-

poral,—perhaps the eternal,—interests of my only child, upon the precarious tenure of the affection of a young man, who, if, as I would hope may be the case, his heart be not utterly depraved, is yet so loose and unsettled in his principles, as to render futile all hopes of his alliance being conducive to the happiness of either party.

"As the son of my dear Charles, and the future—I much fear unworthy—representative of the family, should he hereafter become convinced of his errors, and, as added years bring added wisdom, endeavour to retrace his footsteps in the deplorable path which he seems to be now treading, my countenance, influence, and purse, shall not be wanting to forward his views, and to secure him a reception in society befitting his birth, and the rank he may be destined to fill,—as a son-in-law I never can receive him. I will not add to the length of a letter, already so prolix, by any farther expressions of regret for the line of conduct I am compelled to adopt, nor outrage your maternal feelings by attempting to offer a consolation, which time, and the amended manners of your son, can alone bestow. Your heart, I doubt not, will be wrung by this narrative; believe me, mine is scarcely less so. Judge of my feelings by your own.

"I inclose a ring which Mr. Stafford forced upon my daughter's finger during his courtship—if such it may be called—and which, as he informed her, contains a lock of his own hair.

"Adieu, my dear sister!—deeply as I must lament this unfortunate termination to our mutual hopes, believe that I shall always entertain towards yourself the strongest sentiments of sympathy and regard, and continue to be ever your affectionate brother,

"MANNINGHAM."

Some time elapsed after the perusal of this extraordinary letter, ere I could arrange my ideas sufficiently to form anything like an opinion upon its contents. I almost doubted if I were awake, the whole affair seemed so like an unpleasant dream. Had I indeed been guilty of the absurd and ridiculous conduct imputed to me?

Reason and reflection told me the contrary. Was the whole story, then, an invention of Lord Manningham? His rank, his character, his well-known probity and honour, forbade the supposition. Had he been imposed upon by some rascally swindler, assuming my name to defraud him of his daughter and her rich inheritance? It was difficult to believe that human audacity could soar to such a pitch, and yet this seemed the only rational solution to the mysteries which beset me on all sides. The recollection of my mother's letter too,—of that letter so unaccountably lost and never recovered, seemed to give a colour to this mode of accounting for the occurrences said to have taken place; and a thousand times did I curse my own carelessness which alone could have put it in the power of any individual, however crafty, to carry on so impudent an imposition.

The more I revolved the matter in my mind, after reading Lord Manningham's letter carefully over again, the more convinced I became that this must be indeed the fact, and my thoughts naturally began to turn on the perpetrator. Who could he be? Some one well versed in our family history, beyond all question, or he would at once have stood detected; then, too, the circumstance of his having been at the Oratorio——Nicholas!—it was—it could be no other than that infernal Nicholas who had played me this abominable prank.

His well-known propensity to mischief,—the comparative ease with which he might have succeeded in purloining my credentials,—the confidence I had reposed in him as to my object in returning to London,—all combined to fix him as the author of this, another of his "jolly good hoaxes."

But then again there were difficulties, and those, too apparently insurmountable, in the way of considering him as my pseudo-representative; one, of no very ordinary magnitude, had that very morning made its appearance in the shape of a letter from Sir Oliver Bullwinkle. In it the baronet informed us, that on his arrival at Oxford he found his son slowly recovering from a severe fit of illness, which precluded the possibility of his having been in

London on the evening he had suspected, and declared that he would never trust to the evidence of his own eyes again. He mentioned his intention of delaying his return for a few days on Nicholas's account, as he meant to bring him down with him to the Hall, as soon as he should be able to bear the journey; he said, too, that he should call on Lord Manningham in his way.

This letter, which was almost as long, though not so pithy, as the viscount's, had manifestly cost Sir Oliver no trifling pains in the manufacturing; it was addressed to my mother, and contained the whole of his eventful history from the period of his quitting Underdown; but as Drench strongly insisted on the necessity of keeping his patient perfectly undisturbed, I had taken a liberty which I knew she would pardon, and had broken open the well-known "fetter-locks" which identified her correspondent.

My first impression was to write to my noble uncle immediately; but, on more mature reflection, as Sir Oliver and Nicholas were so soon to be at Underdown, I determined to delay my communication until I should be able to ascertain whether my hopeful cousin was or was not the happy contriver of this precious piece of knavery. Nor did I believe that it would be a very hard task to put the matter beyond dispute, when once the object of my suspicions should favour me with an interview.

While I was yet balancing the *pros* and *cons* of the measure, another billet was put into my hands by Jennings, signed "Edward Maberly, Captain —— regiment;"—it requested an interview, that the writer might acquit himself of a commission of some delicacy, with which he was charged by a brother officer.

Wondering what on earth Captain Maberly, whose name I merely knew as that of a young officer in a corps quartered in the neighbourhood, could possibly have in common with myself, the thought suddenly occurred to me that his business might relate to my eccentric fellow-traveller, about whom I had felt so strong an interest, till he and his concerns were totally driven out of my head by the succession of unpleasant surprises which I had since

experienced. Of course I gave directions that the "gallant officer," as the phrase goes, should be admitted immediately.

The captain, a gentlemanly, soldier-like man, whose air and manner evinced that he moved in the best society, while a scarcely perceptible touch of "the brogue" betrayed that he had drawn his first breath in the sister island, was ushered into the room, and received my compliment with the unembarrassed ease of a man of the world. Jennings, who, as I fancied, surveyed the stranger with looks that betokened more of curiosity than he was in the habit of displaying, placed chairs and withdrew, when my unexpected visitor proceeded to open his commission.

This was, he informed me, to place in my hand a letter from his friend Major Fortescue, of the —— Dragoons, who felt himself compelled to call upon me for an explanation of my conduct towards a young lady of rank, with whose family he was intimately connected, and announced himself as deputed by his aforesaid friend the major to arrange with any friend of mine the time and place of meeting.

Having delivered himself to this effect, the captain quietly proffered me the billet alluded to, and, retiring to the other side of the room, amused himself by reconnoitering through his eyeglass a Dutch Fair, by Teniers, that hung against the wall, leaving me at full leisure to peruse the agreeable despatch of which he was the bearer.

"Sir,—It is with painful reluctance that I yield to the dictates of an imperious and irresistible necessity which forces me to the performance of a task the most revolting to my nature. An interview of the kind I am compelled to demand of you is at all times a matter to be deprecated, and is rendered doubly distressing when, in seeking it, I feel that I am repaying benefit with injury, by aiming at a life which has been risked to preserve my own.

"A miserable destiny, however, which I am unable to control, will have it so,—and forces me to be ungrateful rather than perjured.

"Be assured, sir, no merely human power could have swayed me to the performance of an act which I detest; but Fate wills it, and I bow to the decree.

"My friend who honours me by conveying this to your hands is fully authorized to make every arrangement requisite; and I have only to add that the earlier the hour may be that suits your convenience, the more desirable it will be to

"EUSTACE FORTESCUE."

"*C. Stafford, Esq., &c. &c.*"

"Mighty civil, upon my word!" I half muttered to myself, as I refolded the note; then, in a louder tone, "A most singular invitation, indeed! Pray, sir, is your friend mad?"

"What, sir, can possibly induce you to doubt his sanity?" returned my gallant friend, moving away from the picture, and planting himself in front of me, while his heightened complexion evinced the offence he took at my interrogatory.

"Simply, sir," replied I, "because I cannot conceive that any man in his senses would think of sending such a letter as this which I hold in my hand to a man who knows no more of him than of Harry the Eighth, nor has ever so much as seen him in the course of his life. He talks of benefits which I never can have conferred, and regrets being obliged to seek the life of one who has never given the slightest cause of offence, either to the lady you have alluded to, or to himself."

"These are matters of which I am no judge, sir," said Maberly, coldly, "nor do I pretend to explain what the motives may be which, as he says, compel Major Fortescue to adopt the line of conduct he is pursuing. I have no doubt of their sufficiency, nor do I question either the soundness of his intellect or his honour."

"But, sir," returned I, heartily provoked at the turn this affair seemed likely to take, "if your principal indeed seeks redress for any insult offered to Miss Stafford, I am not the person to whom he should apply."

"I believe I am addressing Mr. Charles Stafford!" was

his reply, accompanied with a look of mingled doubt and surprise.

"Undoubtedly you are, sir; but Charles Stafford is as incapable of offering insult to a lady as Major Fortescue or yourself."

"With that, sir, I must repeat, I can have nothing to do; my business is simply to ascertain whether you will favour my friend with the meeting he desires: I am not here to discuss its propriety. I cannot help observing, however, that you do not appear altogether unacquainted with the lady whose cause he advocates,—a lady whose name certainly never passed my lips."

"That Miss Stafford has been protected by Major Fortescue from a most audacious and unprincipled attempt I am unquestionably aware: the only thing which I mean to deny is that I have been in any way concerned in it."

The features of Maberly assumed an expression of incredulity, not unmixed with contempt for what he plainly considered the pusillanimity of my conduct in denying all participation in a transaction now that it was no longer likely to pass unquestioned. There was no misunderstanding the meaning which his eye conveyed; and I continued, with the indignation to which his glance gave birth,—"Thus far, Captain Maberly, I have spoken to vindicate myself against unfounded aspersion: if you attribute my so doing to any other motive than that which I have avowed, you are widely mistaken. The tongue, however, is not the only weapon with which I am prepared to defend my reputation when attacked; and you may inform your principal that, if he considers this declaration of mine insufficient, I have not the slightest reluctance to grant him the meeting he requires, whenever and wherever he pleases."

"When a difference of this kind exists," returned my companion, "the sooner it is adjusted the better for all parties. To-morrow morning, therefore, if you have no objection, my friend will expect the favour of your company, at seven, near the ruined chapel in the next parish. The situation is a retired one, and little liable to interruption."

"Rely on my punctuality, Captain Maberly."

"Mr. Charles Stafford, your most *obadient!*" he replied, resuming his hat and putting on his gloves with the air of a man taking leave after a visit of ceremony; then, with a slight bend, which seemed to intimate that my acceptance of his proposal had somewhat redeemed me in his opinion, he moved towards the door. I rang the bell and attended him to the hall, where we separated—he to acquaint his principal with the result of his embassy—I to make such arrangements as the time would admit of for meeting my unknown antagonist in the field, and to execute some other measures which the uncertainty of the coming event rendered it advisable for me to set about forthwith.

To procure the assistance of a friend who might accompany me to the scene of action, and officiate as my second, was become indispensable. This, therefore, was my first care. I could have wished that Allanby, on whose honour and friendship I placed the greatest reliance, might have been the person; but this was out of the question; the distance was too great to admit of my applying to him: he was still, as I believed, in London; and the shortness of the time which must elapse before the decision of the quarrel, precluded the possibility of a communication being made to him with any chance of success. I therefore turned my thoughts towards the neighbouring garrison, with many of the officers belonging to which I was on sufficient terms of intimacy to warrant a request that they would do me the favour to see me shot properly. The very first man to whom I applied,—a young lieutenant who had been in the habit of accompanying me on shooting-parties of a different description in the course of the preceding winter,—willingly undertook the task; and this, the first object of my solicitude, being provided for, I had leisure to turn my attention to matters of scarcely less importance.

To write to my mother,—the last communication she might ever receive from a son whom, even when she believed him to be stigmatized and branded with justly-deserved opprobrium and dishonour, she yet found it

impossible to banish from her affections! The task was indeed a severe one: a thousand conflicting emotions warred in my bosom, and rendered me scarcely capable of carrying it into execution; my letter was, however, at length finished, and contained, of course, an absolute disavowal, on my part, of the whole of the conduct imputed to me by Lord Manningham; the full persuasion I felt that my name had been assumed by some impostor for the most infamous of purposes; together with a detail of such facts as, in the event of my not surviving the approaching contest, might tend to elucidate the mystery, and rescue my memory from the discredit which might otherwise attach to it, should I fall a victim to the artifices of a scoundrel, and to what—an internal voice began to whisper—was a mistaken sense of honour.

That my letter contained also assurances of the warmest love and affection, I need hardly say: the remembrance of all my mother's fondness, her more than maternal kindness from my earliest infancy; the reflection that the step I was about to take might deprive her, at once and for ever, of the only solace of her declining years—the only hope of her widowed heart; that my falling in the encounter would too surely shake out, with an unhallowed hand, the few remaining sands that yet lingered in Time's failing hour-glass, and "bring down her grey hairs with sorrow to the grave,"—all conspired to unman me, and shook for a moment the resolution I had formed of meeting my incomprehensible antagonist.

Not that I was altogether free from some rather unpleasant sensations of a nature purely selfish, when I considered the situation in which a few short hours might place me, and the more than questionable proposition how far I might be justified, in thus exposing my own life and aiming at that of another, before that Almighty Being, whose denunciations against the crime of murder I could not shut out from my memory.

In vain did I encourage myself by the argument that, as the usages of civilized society extend the principle of self-defence from our persons to our reputation, I was as much authorized to protect that which was dearer to me

than life as to defend my life itself;—a voice, stronger than that of the world, told me that I WAS WRONG! The awakening tones of conscience, which I would fain have silenced had it been in my power, warned me of the fallacy of my reasoning, and thundered in my ear, "Thou shalt not kill!" Pride, that sin by which fell the angels, and a false shame,—the dread of *what the world would say*,—still drove me on to disregard its faithful admonitions, and crushed the nascent intention of even yet avoiding to dip my hand in blood, while it presented to my view myself a mark for scorn "to point its slow and moving finger at,"—a wretched object loaded with the contempt and derision of all who knew me. No!—it was too late! The die was thrown, and I must stand the hazard of the cast.

With burning temples, and an aching heart, I retired to my room, not daring to trust myself again in my mother's presence, and, throwing myself on the bed, endeavoured to lose in the forgetfulness of slumber the few hours which must necessarily revolve before that at which Armitage had appointed to be with me.

CHAPTER XV.

Ah me! what perils do environ
The man that meddles with cold iron!
HUDIBRAS.

HOW SLEEP THE BRAVE?—AN APPOINTMENT.—AN AFFAIR OF SENTIMENT.—AN AFFAIR OF HONOUR.—A STANDING UP.—A TUMBLING DOWN.

SLEEP, which I had hitherto rarely courted in vain, refused to visit my eyelids with her tranquillizing influence, and the grey tints of twilight, fast flying before a sun that rose in unclouded majesty, saw me pressing my disordered pillow in feverish restlessness. I rose and unclosed the window;—the fragrance of morning—of the last morning on which I might ever inhale it—revived

me: I resolved to seek, in the open air, and in activity, that refuge from my own thoughts denied me in the more confined atmosphere and retirement of my chamber.

Hastily arranging my dress, I placed on the toilet the letter which I had addressed to my mother, and forcibly smothering a pang that seized me as the action recalled her image to my mind, descended slowly and cautiously a back staircase which communicated with the offices, and, through them, with the park. My purpose was effected without disturbing any of the inmates of the mansion, who, buried in sleep, dreamed not of the unholy errand on which I stole, like a thief, from the habitation of my fathers.

As I turned an angle of the building, the windows of my mother's apartment caught my eye. The brilliancy of the morning sunbeams, which fell full upon them, rendered scarcely observable the faint flickerings of the watch-light within, the gleamings of which, now weak, now bursting into momentary brightness, seemed to announce that it was fast sinking in the socket, soon to expire, and be no more. "And such," I whispered, "may be the brief tenure of my own existence here! Oh, my mother, if indeed the irrevocable fiat has gone forth, may He who 'tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,' support thee in the hour of trial, and, by the blessed hope of a future meeting, assuage the poignancy of thy grief for the loss of one who now invokes thy blessing, as he, from his inmost soul, implores a blessing upon thee!" A shadow passed across the room between the light and the curtains, and seemed to be approaching the window. Nothing doubting but that it was Martha, who remained in attendance on her mistress, and fearing to be seen at that early hour, I ended my apostrophe abruptly, and rushed into the obscurity of the neighbouring shrubs.

A few moments' exertion freed me from the thicket in which I had ensconced myself, and placed me in a path which, winding among shady recesses in a circuitous direction, finally emerged near the end of the avenue that led from the Hall to the high-road. As I approached its termination, the appearance of Armitage, hastily advancing with a small mahogany case under his arm, told

me that it was time to repair to the place of our appointment. I joined him immediately, and we proceeded forthwith towards the scene of rendezvous.

As we walked along with quick, undeviating footsteps, the good-natured lieutenant inquired more particularly into the cause of quarrel, hinting at the pleasure it would give him should the matter admit of such an explanation as might allow the affair to be accommodated without prejudice to the feelings or character of either party. This I felt to be impossible, but contented myself with telling the worthy fellow that he was nearly as well acquainted with the real grounds of the dispute as myself; that I merely obeyed the summons of a gentleman, who, as I verily believed, was visiting on my head the aggression of another; but that, as my endeavours to convince him of his mistake had been in vain, we must even abide by the decision to which he had thought it necessary to appeal. This account increased the desire which the lieutenant had from the very first entertained, of terminating the business without bringing it to the issue of mortal arbitrement; and he entreated me to permit him, previously to anything else taking place, to use his endeavours to procure an amicable adjustment of a difference, which, after all, as he observed, had evidently originated in mistake.

"It will be useless, Armitage," I replied; "nevertheless, act as you think proper. I know you too well to fear that my honour will suffer in your hands; but, from the terms in which his invitation is couched, I am convinced my gentleman will not be satisfied without burning a little gunpowder."

"Is he so determined an enemy? Pray, what sort of a person is your antagonist?"

"Upon my word, that is rather a puzzling question, as I am not quite sure that I ever set eyes upon him in my life. He holds a commission in the dragoons, however, and that is all I can tell you, being almost all I know of him myself."

"It is altogether a very extraordinary affair," returned Armitage. "You shall not fight, however, if I can pre-

vent it;—but stay,—here is the old chapel, and yonder, if I mistake not, come our men."

He was right;—a few seconds brought us together. Captain Maberly and his friend advanced from an adjoining field, the latter wrapped up in a large surtout, which he unfolded as we drew near, and revealed the person of my fellow-passenger on the mail, whom I had pulled out of the river two days before.

I cannot say that I was altogether unprepared for this recognition; the possibility of it had more than once occurred to my mind since Maberly's visit, and the supposition had acquired additional weight from some passages in his letter, which I found it otherwise difficult to comprehend; still I had some doubts on the subject, as I could scarcely believe it possible that the most sanguinary of mankind would, whatever his primary intentions might have been, persist in raising his hand to deprive that man of life who had so recently preserved his own, and that too in a quarrel in which he could feel but little personal interest—but little interest?—A thought flashed upon my mind with the rapidity of lightning, and dissipated in an instant the reluctance I had hitherto felt to commence hostilities. Amelia Stafford—for her he had come to contend, and her he was determined to possess, though the removal of so formidable an obstacle as myself, by any means, might be a necessary preliminary. She was the object of his perhaps mercenary attachment. She whom he had rescued from a plot contrived, in all probability, by himself, and which my death was indispensable to conceal from eventual detection! This, indeed, presented a ready solution to the mystery;—as the champion of her cause and the avenger of her injuries he would stand on a proud eminence, and challenge her love with a powerful, perhaps irresistible, claim; while in my destruction he would not only lay the foundation of his own hopes, but obtain the removal of a rival, doubly dangerous from the well-known wishes of her father in my favour, and the power I must inevitably possess of unmasking him to Lord Manningham, a single interview with whom might be sufficient to level with the dust the flimsy superstructure

which his arts had raised. That the whole personation of myself, the elopement and pretended rescue, were but parts of a systematic and villanous plot, of which my destruction was to furnish the *dénouement*, I no longer entertained a doubt, and the indignation which this conviction gave rise to in my mind operated so strongly upon me that it was with the utmost difficulty I could restrain my impatience, while our seconds were arranging the necessary preliminaries. I burned to chastise the villany which I fancied I had detected, and to inflict a severe retribution for my defeated pretensions and vilified character.

While Armitage and Maberly, who had retired a few paces apart, were preparing the weapons, and conferring on the business which had brought us together, Major Fortescue remained at a short distance from me leaning against a tree.

His face was pale—almost livid; his air abstracted; and he appeared to be labouring under the deepest dejection. He had raised his hat to me when we first met, and seemed as if wishing to address me; but, enraged at his ingratitude and hypocrisy, I showed no corresponding inclination; and he accordingly renounced his intention, if indeed he had ever entertained it. His eyes were now fixed upon the ground, his arms folded across his breast, which heaved high at intervals, as if from the effect of some strong internal emotion. I turned from gazing on him to watch the motions of our two "friends"—so we term the people who load the pistols that are to blow our brains out; they were now deeply engaged in conversation.

In a few moments Maberly quitted his companion, and, rejoining Fortescue, made a communication to him: a short but animated discussion took place between them, at the close of which Maberly returned to my "friend," who, after listening to him for a few moments, stepped up to me, and informed me that he was the bearer of a proposal from Major Fortescue, who, from the great reluctance which he felt to proceed against one from whom he had recently received so great an obligation, was prepared, he said, to drop the dispute, and consent to sink the past in oblivion, provided I would offer such an apology to Miss

Stafford as he should feel warranted in recommending her to accept.

"Tell Major Fortescue," I exclaimed, half-choked with passion, "that the most ample concessious *he* could offer to *me* would now be insufficient to appease the sense of injury which I feel, or to avert the vengeance I am determined to exact. Let him take his ground!"

Armitage retired in silence, and proceeded to measure out twelve paces, at either extremity of which my antagonist and myself took our stations: the weapons were delivered to us; and Maberly having given the signal by dropping his handkerchief, each discharged his pistol at the same instant. Fortescue's aim was but too correct: his ball struck me, and I fell; the blood flowed copiously from my breast, and in a few moments I became totally insensible to all that was passing around me.

CHAPTER XVI.

There 's honour for you!
SHAKSPEARE.

No bones broke, but sore pepper'd!
Midas.

"ENOUGH IS AS GOOD AS A FEAST."—A SUDDEN ILLNESS.—A SLOW RECOVERY.—"GETTING ONE'S GRUEL" METAPHORICALLY—LITERALLY.—THERE 'S LIFE IN A MUSCLE.

On recovering my senses, I found myself stretched upon a flock-bed, in a neighbouring cottage, to which I had been conveyed, and supported in the arms of Armitage, whose manly countenance expressed the joy he felt at seeing those eyes re-opening to the light of day which he had believed to be closed for ever.

Drench, accompanied by an assistant, was standing near, occupied in examining the wound, preparatory to an attempt he was about to make at extracting the ball, which, having entered the higher part of my right breast, had glanced

against and broken the collar-bone, finally taking up its quarters in the upper part of the shoulder, near the neck.

The operation was a long and painful one, and I more than once relapsed into a state similar to that from which I had so lately emerged before the surgeon's endeavours were crowned with success. The bullet, however, was at length dislodged from its asylum, and made its appearance together with a fragment of my waistcoat, which had very lovingly accompanied it in its progres. Drench announced his prize in a tone which betokened the satisfaction he felt at its extraction, adding that, notwithstanding the great effusion of blood which had taken place, he saw at present no reason to apprehend any ultimate danger from the wound,—though it was certainly a severe one,—provided a strict attention to regimen, and to the medicines he should prescribe for the purpose of guarding against the access of fever, was rigidly observed.

This opinion, most oracularly pronounced, seemed to give great satisfaction to some one present, though, so qualified, it amounted in effect to little more than that pronounced by Fielding's model for all diplomatists,—

> "Indeed, I cannot positively say;
> But, as near as I can guess—I cannot tell."

"Powers of Heaven! accept my thanks!" exclaimed a voice from an obscure corner of the apartment, in the tones of which I had no difficulty in recognizing those of Fortescue.

A tattered curtain, of the coarsest materials, which hung at the side of my humble couch, had hitherto concealed him from my view. I made an effort to draw it aside, but the pain occasioned by the motion compelled me to desist. The friendly lieutenant, whose attentions had throughout been unintermitting, saw my purpose, and accomplished it for me. My eye rested upon my late antagonist, who, perceiving that I was aware of his presence, advanced slowly, and placed himself at the foot of the bed.

As I marked the agony depictured on his countenance, a doubt as to the truth of my late suspicions sprang up in my mind, and I could not help confessing to myself that

his agitation bore every sign of being the genuine emanation of his heart. If it were assumed, and merely the fictitious display of a concern foreign to his feelings, he must be indeed the prince of hypocrites; yet, supposing it real, how could I reconcile its existence with the line of conduct he had pursued?

While I hesitated, his eye sank under the steadfast gaze of mine, and, uttering a deep sigh, he walked round the bed until he reached my pillow, when, bending over me, he took my hand.

"Stafford!" he exclaimed, in a voice of almost awful solemnity, "how deeply I lament the issue of this affair, no one but the unseen Being whose behests I have obeyed can truly witness. Could you but see my heart, however, you would confess that your situation is Paradise compared with mine, and you would look on me with pity rather than resentment. Heaven alone knows how fervently I have prayed to be spared this deed, and, even at the risk of my soul's happiness, could I have avoided it —could you have been prevailed upon to make the only atonement in your power ——"

I cannot describe the disgust I felt at what I again began to consider the cool impudence of this declaration. "Cease, Major Fortescue," I replied, "your hypocritical condolements on an evil of your own creating, nor add insult to injury. You have played your part hitherto triumphantly; but be not too secure: the time will come, I doubt not, when I shall be able to unmask your motives, as well as those of the villain who has assumed my name to perpetrate an act which you still persist in charging upon me. A single interview with Lord Manningham will suffice to overthrow your machinations, and to convince him, by the evidence of his own eyes, of the imposition which has been practised upon him. Leave me, sir; —I neither need your affected sympathy, nor desire your presence."

The earnestness of my manner appeared to make an impression upon him: once again he raised his penetrating eye to mine, as he repeated, in an under-tone, the word "imposition," and seemed as if he would read my very

soul. "Imposition!" he continued, with an incredulous but melancholy movement of the head—"oh that it were possible! but it cannot be: Lord Manningham and his lovely daughter could neither be themselves deceived, nor would they practise such a deception upon me."

"Of the latter fact I am very well satisfied," retorted I; "but that they have themselves been grossly, infamously deceived, I re-assert. That you, sir, have laboured under a similar delusion, I by no means take upon me to maintain; and, but that I believe the information to be, as far as you are concerned, unnecessary, I would repeat, that with Lord Manningham I have never yet exchanged a single syllable.'

"Gracious Heaven! what would you insinuate? Is it—can it be possible that there *may* have been an error! If so, what then am I? But no!—it is *not* possible: Lord Manningham himself assured me——"

"That a scoundrel," interrupted I, staggered in my opinion by his manner, "had introduced himself into his house, and had endeavoured to carry off his daughter; but Lord Manningham could not know that his nephew's carelessness, in suffering a letter to be purloined from him, afforded an easy opportunity to the thief, or his confederates, of palming on him a fictitious relation, and of nearly making his Amelia the prey of a swindler."

Never shall I forget the expression of Fortescue's countenance as I finished;—surprise, distrust, and horror, appeared to be contending within him for the mastery. "What am I to believe?" cried he at length, but in a voice faltering and scarcely articulate, then—changing at once to deep sepulchral hoarseness, while his figure seemed to dilate to more than its usual magnitude;—"Mr. Stafford," he continued, "answer me, I conjure you, as a gentleman and a man of honour; and, as you hope for happiness in this world and the next, answer truly!—Are you not the man who, after meeting Miss Stafford at the theatre, introduced yourself to her father as his nephew, and eventually carried off the young lady to St. Albans?"

"I am not, so help me Heaven!—That I saw Amelia at the theatre is true; but I was at that time ignorant of

her name : I saw her once afterwards descend from a carriage at her father's door, but neither then, nor on any other occasion, previous or subsequent, did I exchange one syllable with her. Unless the gentleman who at that time accompanied her be her father, I have never seen Lord Manningham in my life !"

The exertion I had used in uttering these words was too much for me, and I sank back, exhausted, on the pillow. Drench immediately interfered, blaming himself for having permitted the conversation to continue so long in my present condition.

" Come, come, gentlemen," cried the doctor, summoning up all his dignity and determination, " I must have no more of this, or my patient will give me the slip after all,—and you, sir," addressing himself to Fortescue, " now that this more serious matter is disposed of, let us examine your hurt."

It was now that I, for the first time, perceived that Fortescue also was wounded. His escape had been indeed a narrow one, the bullet from my pistol having grazed his temple, the skin of which it had slightly raised. The wound was, of course, trifling in the extreme ; but of that, and indeed of everything else around him, he appeared to be now altogether unconscious. The proffered assistance of the surgeon he neither accepted nor repulsed, but remained for some moments as in a state of stupefaction, his eyes fixed upon my face with a vacant stare, frightful to behold and almost impossible to describe,—a filmy glassiness obscured their orbs, and gave a ghastliness to their appearance, to be equalled only by that of the fabled Vampire.

He remained as it were rooted to the floor for a few seconds, while Drench was describing the exceeding inconvenience which might have arisen " had the ball taken a direction ever so little more to the left, and fractured the parietal bone,"—then turned, and abruptly rushed from the cottage.

A chaise, which a son of the peasant whose house we occupied had been despatched to order from the neighbouring town, soon after arrived ; into it I was, with

some little difficulty, lifted, and, accompanied by Drench and Armitage, who refused to quit me while his attentions could be at all serviceable, I was conveyed at an easy pace to the Hall.

As we slowly rolled along, my thoughts once more reverted from the strange scene which had just passed, to the situation of my mother. I recollected with much uneasiness the letter which I had left for her in my chamber, and trembled with apprehension lest it should have been discovered and delivered according to its address. If so, what severe, and, as I now trusted, unnecessary pangs might I not have caused her!—nay, who could tell how far she might have been affected? I might be her murderer!—In spite of the prohibitions of the doctor, who enjoined me silence, I could not forbear giving vent to my feelings, and expressed my alarm with an earnest request that the driver might be directed to accelerate his pace, in the hope of preventing so fatal a catastrophe. This, however, Drench positively refused to accede to, endeavouring to dissipate the uneasiness I could not help feeling by reminding me that it was yet scarcely eight o'clock, and of the utter improbability that any communication would have been made to the invalid at so early an hour, even admitting—what was very unlikely—that the letter had as yet been found by the servants.

Happily his prognostics were verified by the event. My very absence had not been noticed, nor had any one entered my room since I quitted it. The chaise was directed round to a back entrance, and I was carried to my chamber, in a different part of the building from that occupied by Mrs. Stafford, without the slightest bustle or disturbance.

Poor old Jennings, with sorrow legibly depicted in his venerable countenance, as the ready tear stood in his eye, undertook to officiate in the capacity of head nurse; while Drench assumed the delicate and difficult task of breaking to my mother, as gently as he could, the event which it was impossible to keep altogether from her knowledge, and also of recounting to her the whole history of my proceedings in London, together with the rascally

trick played me there, of all which I now felt obliged to make the worthy son of Hippocrates my wondering confidant. As to my suspicions concerning the principal actor in the farce which had like to have had so tragical a *dénouement*, those I kept closely concealed, for the present, in my own bosom.

Of this arduous commission the little doctor acquitted himself with a degree of skill and caution which deserved the highest praise. My mother was indeed sensibly affected at the intelligence of my mishap; but when he coupled with it the satisfactory information, that provided common care was observed, nothing more serious than a temporary confinement was now to be apprehended, the assurance of that fact, and his story so completely exonerating me from the charges brought against me, tended most happily to compose rather than to excite her mind; and, however mixed her sensations might be, those of a pleasurable nature evidently gained the preponderance. Indeed, the anxious desire she now felt to see and console me so stimulated her to exertion, and to the shaking off the torpor which had benumbed her faculties, that I have no hesitation in declaring that the circumstance contributed, on the whole, not a little to the re-establishment of her health.

At first her visits, under the regulation of Doctor Drench, were, like those of angels, "few and far between;" but, as her strength improved, and the chances of fever on my side became less to be apprehended, they increased both in their frequency and duration, till, at length, almost all my mother's time was passed in my apartment.

Several days had elapsed since the duel, and everything, in the language of the infirmary, was going on "as well as could be expected." The broken bone had been set without difficulty, and save that the hemorrhage had produced a considerable degree of weakness, which Drench's water-gruel and barley-broth (sorry substitutes for the roast-beef dinners I had been in the habit of discussing) did not altogether tend to correct, I was neither in bad health nor in low spirits, when, one evening, as the shadows were lengthening in the setting sun, the sound of a car-

riage, and an increasing bustle within doors, announced the arrival of some personage of no common importance.

This *distingué* I ventured, and not without reason, to prophesy was Sir Oliver himself, returned from his expedition; and soon the sound of his voice, issuing from the hall and echoing up the great staircase, reflected the greatest credit on my skill in divination.

Miss Pyefinch, who had accompanied my mother to take her tea in the apartment of the invalid, stepped out to inform herself of the cause of the unwonted bustle in the lower regions. She soon came back with the information that the baronet had arrived, accompanied by two gentlemen and a lady; and that, having earnestly inquired after the state of my health, as well as that of Mrs. Stafford, the whole party was now ensconced in the Cedar parlour, where the presence of my mother was particularly requested, "provided she felt herself equal to the exertion."

It was a source of no little wonder to me how Sir Oliver could have become acquainted with the events of the preceding week, as, being at the period such a bird of passage, no one had known exactly where to address a letter to him with any probable chance of its coming safely to hand, and consequently none of the family had written to him on the subject; I could only conclude, therefore, that he had picked up the news of my rencontre from some gossiping neighbour, as his post-chaise brought him through the town; but, on starting this supposition, Miss Kitty electrified me by replying that, though she knew not where my uncle had gained his information, "there was no post-chaise in the case, as the party had arrived in a handsome travelling-barouche, with several out-riders in rich liveries." Eagerly did I inquire the colour of the latter; the answer was, to my infinite joy, and as I had foreboded—"Green and Gold." Lord Manningham then was arrived, and the whole of this mysterious affair would now be sifted to the bottom!

The hour subsequent to my mother's quitting my apartment, which she did immediately on receiving Sir Oliver's summons, was, I verily believe, one of the longest

ever passed by mortal man. I had not even the poor consolation of indulging my own conjectures in quiet, as my companion, Miss Kitty, became now more than usually voluble in giving vent to her own surmises and remarks; and, as she was not particularly happy in the brilliancy of the one or the ingenuity of the other, I should at that moment have infinitely preferred the peaceful enjoyment of my own; this too the rather, as I had already commenced a curious speculation with regard to the identity of "the Lady," whom my informant mentioned as constituting one of the *partie quarrée* in the "handsome travelling barouche."

It is true Miss Pyefinch had been totally silent as to the age and personal appearance of this traveller of the softer sex, and a feeling, which I did not stop to analyze, prevented my making any inquiries of her upon the subject; but my heart whispered me that it could be no other than Amelia, the fair, the unconscious cause of my late misadventure and present confinement.

Always impatient of restraint, I now regretted it the more seriously, inasmuch as it precluded the possibility of my at once satisfying myself whether these fond anticipations were correct. Nay, but that the deranged state of my toilet was altogether incompatible with the attempt, I much doubt whether my wound alone would have been a consideration sufficiently strong to have prevented my making a trial at least of the ability of my legs to support me to the Cedar parlour. At length, to relieve my fidgety impatience, which had risen to such a height as to drive my fair entertainer into a monologue, the sound of some one approaching was heard from the gallery that led to my apartment.

I had half raised myself from the sofa on which I was reclining, in eager expectation of I hardly knew whom, when, as it drew nearer, the footstep sounded heavily, and was evidently that of a man: in a few seconds the door opened, and I fell back into my former position as I beheld—Fortescue!

My surprise at the sight of this very unexpected visitor at first prevented my observing the very peculiar expres-

sion which his features had assumed. I could not, however, help at length remarking the singular and mournful wildness of his manner, as, drawing a chair in silence, he seated himself opposite the sofa, and fixed his full, dark, penetrating eyes upon me, with a glance of the keenest scrutiny.

"It is, it must be so!" he at length exclaimed, his sudden and unlooked-for appearance having too much disconcerted me to admit of my addressing him at the moment. "It must be so,—Mr. Stafford, I greatly fear—fear, did I say?—hope would have been a more appropriate expression—that I have been greatly, dreadfully deceived, that I have been driven, goaded on, to the perpetration of an act, to you most unjustifiably injurious; and, oh! how much more so to my own peace of mind! And yet, if so it be, what am I to think?—Is this hand never to be free from the stain of blood? Must I again ——"

His lip quivered, and as he covered his eyes with a tremulous hand, I could perceive that his whole frame was strongly agitated by some internal emotion.

"Major Fortescue," I replied, "your conduct and expressions through the whole of this business have been such as I profess not to be able either to explain or comprehend; but if the latter, as I presume may be the case, allude to an imposition which, I am half inclined to think, has been practised upon you, know, sir, that Lord Manningham is now in the house, from whom I shall, I doubt not, receive ample justice, and whose testimony will at once prove the little foundation that has existed for those calumnies which have been fastened upon me. As to any ulterior proceedings, you will use your pleasure. I never did and never shall shrink from vindicating my reputation in any way you, or any other person, may think proper to require."

"Oh, Stafford," rejoined my singular companion, "how much do you mistake the nature of my feelings towards you! If my heart bled when I thought myself forced by an irresistible command to point my weapon at the breast of him whom I would gladly have taken to my own, what

must it now do when I perceive that he, my preserver, was guiltless of the act which, even if committed by him, would but too surely have failed in justifying me to myself for his destruction? Lord Manningham is indeed here—here, beyond all question, to convict me of the blackest ingratitude, and to plunge me once more into that ocean of uncertainty and impending crime from which I fondly hoped that I had at length escaped."

Thus saying, he wrung my hand with a pressure almost amounting to violence, while a cold shuddering showed the strength of the convulsive affection which shook his whole body.

"Strange, incomprehensible man!" I exclaimed; "against whom, then, is this 'impending crime' to be directed? or who is that powerful and remorseless instigator, whose sanguinary behests you find it so impossible to disobey, even when they go to the diabolical extent of depriving a fellow-creature of life? Who is this fiend? Is it, can it be possible, that Lord Manningham ——"

"Oh, no! no, no!—Lord Manningham is as innocent of the knowledge as ——. But we are interrupted—no more of this at present. You shall one day know the story—the brief, yet miserable story, of the unhappy being before you;—and then you will pity,—yes Stafford, you must pity, though you may not forgive me. They are here."

He rose as he uttered these last words; and relinquishing the hand which he had hitherto retained, walked to the window, while the opening door exhibited to my view the figure of Sir Oliver Bullwinkle, ushering into the room the well-remembered, venerable, and military-looking personage whom I had seen alight from the chariot on the eventful morning of my mortifying repulse.

A smile of good-humoured urbanity relieved the serious expression which concern at my situation appeared to have cast over his countenance, as, advancing into the chamber, he proffered me his hand, saying, without waiting for the baronet's introduction—

"Will my dear nephew excuse the petulant and absurd conduct of an old man who ought to have known better?

and forgive the mistake which, through the knavery of a rascal, occasioned him so rude a rejection, in a house the doors of which ought to have flown open of themselves to welcome him?"

The air of frank good-humour, by no means devoid of dignity, with which Lord Manningham made his advances, would at once have dissipated any remains of resentment which I might have retained against him, had it been possible for me, with the conviction I now felt that an impudent imposition had been practised upon both of us, to have suffered any such to exist.

My reply was perfectly in accordance with these sentiments; and a few moments sufficed to put all parties, with the exception of one individual, completely at their ease.

That one was Fortescue,—the eccentric, the inexplicable Fortescue. The address made to me by my noble uncle had evidently convinced him of what indeed he had before, apparently, ceased to doubt; namely, that his vengeance had been misdirected, and levelled against a person in no way implicated in, or responsible for, the villanous transaction which, it seemed, he considered himself commissioned to chastise. Nevertheless, from his demeanour during the conversation which ensued between my two uncles and myself,—a conversation which he witnessed without joining in,—it would have been difficult to determine whether joy or regret was the predominant feeling of his mind at the *éclaircissement* which ensued.

From this colloquy I collected that, immediately on quitting me, my late antagonist, whom my repeated declarations had at last staggered in his belief of my being the insulter of Miss Stafford, had flown with all the speed good cattle and well-feed drivers could exert, to Grosvenor Square, where he found Sir Oliver, then recently arrived in London, in close divan with Lord Manningham on the very subject he had himself travelled so eagerly to introduce.

The result of their conference was such as to convert the doubts he had already begun to entertain almost into a certainty of his mistake; the fact, however, turn out as

it might, it was soon resolved, should be forthwith ascertained by the evidence of Lord Manningham himself, who, wishing as earnestly as any one to dive at once to the bottom of the mystery which enveloped the whole transaction, readily acquiesced in a proposal made by Fortescue, and strongly seconded by Sir Oliver, that he should, with all convenient speed, accompany the latter to Underdown Hall, and satisfy all parties, by the test of ocular demonstration, whether the person wounded—a word, by the way, which made the good baronet jump out of his chair, as if the seat had been suddenly subjected to the action of an electric conductor—was, or was not, the identical hero of the memorable expedition to St. Albans.

CHAPTER XVII.

Thrice happy they who tread the sacred ground
Where learning's joys with peace serene are found.
SHARPE.

THE LIONS.—SPURS AND SWORDS.—SKULLS AND BONES.—PRIDE IN A PUNCH-BOWL.—HISTORIC DOUBTS.—AN EPITAPH.—A PRIZE POEM.

SIR OLIVER, whom we left amusing himself with the "lions" at Oxford, had derived, it seems, so much gratification from the scenes there submitted to his view,—scenes which, independent of their real beauty, possessed also the seducing charm of novelty to recommend them to his notice,—that he was easily persuaded to extend the period which he had originally determined should be the limit of his stay, and to accompany his son to the party at Oriel, the invitation to which had been the means of introducing Mr. Hanbury to his acquaintance.

With this young gentleman, indeed, Sir Oliver had become much pleased, as he had very good-naturedly devoted a good deal of time to the accompanying him through the University, and pointing out to his notice everything in it that is usually an object of curiosity to strangers.

In this, his voluntarily assumed office, he acted as a most efficient substitute for my Cousin Nicholas, whom the egotistical details in which I have lately indulged have occasioned me too much to neglect.

The strength of this interesting invalid was, as he informed his father, scarcely yet renovated enough to admit of his undergoing the fatigue of "lionizing," though he occasionally attended him on some of his shorter perambulations.

The impression made upon the baronet's mind by the wonders of Alma Mater was a profound one, and filled him with much veneration for those seats of learning, of which, if the truth must be told, he had previously entertained a very inadequate, not to say derogatory, idea.

The immense collection of volumes contained in the Bodleian filled him with wonder and amazement, which was not a little heightened when his son informed him that, in order to obtain even a moderately respectable degree, it was absolutely necessary for the student to make himself master of at least three-fourths of their contents. This piece of intelligence, deriving all due weight from the gravity with which it was announced, and the confirmation of Hanbury, struck him with no little awe, or, as Nicholas happily expressed it, "quite conglomerated the governor's faculties," while it tended much to abate the regret which he had begun to entertain at the recollection of his never having himself prosecuted his studies in a place the very air of which seemed impregnated with wisdom and science.

The Ashmolean Museum, too, came in for its due share of admiration, with its gloves and spurs of the unhappy Charles the First, its Henry the Eighth's crystal-hilted sword, and one of the skulls of Oliver Cromwell, the fellow to which is, I am told, preserved with equal care at Naseby,—a smaller one, said to have belonged to him when a little boy, and once in the possession of Sir Ashton Lever, is, I believe, generally admitted to be spurious.

These and other relics of the olden time,—not forgetting the gigantic thigh-bone supposed to have been once the pro-

perty of Sir Bevis of Hampton,—drew from Sir Oliver a long and interesting dissertation on the manners and usages of the chivalrous ages, which, I much regret for the reader's sake, was not committed to writing on the spot, were it only to preserve certain authentic family anecdotes with which it was interspersed, about sundry illustrious Bullwinkles who flourished in those happy days.

The baronet could not, however, help expressing his surprise at finding no traces preserved, in this curious repository, of the celebrated brazen head constructed by Roger Bacon, whose history, as delivered to himself by his maternal grandmother, he very faithfully recapitulated at large, scouting the idea that the bit of gilded wood, miscalled a nose, to which I have already alluded, could ever have formed part or parcel of the head in question, though Nicholas quoted Bishop Heber's "Whippiad"* to convince him of the truth of the hypothesis.

The splendid crosier of William of Wykeham attracted his attention much more than the beautiful chapel in which it is preserved; but of all the curious and interesting objects presented to his view, no one article in the whole University, as Sir Oliver several times afterwards took occasion to declare, conveyed to his mind so lively an impression of the "Sublime and Beautiful" as the magnificent amplitude of the "Great Sir Watkin," the pride and glory of Jesus College.

At sight of this most stupendous of all possible punch-bowls, my uncle was absolutely enraptured,—words were too weak to express the extent of his admiration; and seldom, indeed, in after-days, was his favourite beverage placed before him without a tear of sympathetic remembrance glistening in his eye, as he made some allusion to its massy splendour.

Nor were Sir Oliver's examinations entirely confined to the precincts of the University: a hundred hallowed spots in its neighbourhood were explored. The haunted remains of Cumnor, which Sir Walter has since invested with such

* Where o'er the door in brazen radiance glows
The vast projection of the mystic nose,
Relic erewhile of Bacon's wondrous arts," &c.

absorbing interest,—the chaste shades of Bagley, and the leafy honours of "Joe Pullen's Tree,"—all underwent his scrutiny; nor was Godstow forgotten, where, after a hearty luncheon upon spitch-cocked eels, the baronet had the satisfaction of copying into his own pocket-book, with his own hand, the sole memorial to the fair paramour of our second Henry, which some pious hand has inscribed amidst the ruins where she died :—

"Hic jacet in terris Rosa mundi, non Rosamunda!
Non redolet, sed olet, quæ redolere solet."

It is far from improbable that Sir Oliver, with all his love for antiquity, might not have troubled himself to copy an inscription of which, in its original language, he did not understand one syllable, had not Nicholas, of whose poetical abilities I have formerly given a pleasing specimen, translated it for him into the vernacular, and recommended that it should be transferred to Miss Pyefinch's album, in the following distich, composed, as he averred, in the true spirit of the original :—

"Here doth Fair Rosamond like any peasant lie!
— She once was fragrant, but now smells unpleasantly!"

"And yet," said Hanbury, when Sir Oliver had "booked it," "there are those who maintain that all our sympathy for the fair Clifford is only so much good feeling thrown away—that Queen Eleanor, after all, was of the two the more befitting object of it;—they say that the bowl and the dagger are all moonshine, and that the beloved *chère amie* survived, by many a good long year, the injured wife who is stigmatized as her murderess."

"The devil they do!" said Sir Oliver.

"Yes, sir," answered Nicholas, "such is the scepticism of the age. Modern research, indeed, has upset all our received impressions of English history. Harold was not killed at Hastings, Richard of Bordeaux at Pontefract, nor Edward the Second at Berkeley Castle; Henry the Sixth was not killed at all;—Richard the Third was a well-made man; his nephews were never smothered——"

"It's a lie!" cried the baronet; "I've seen their ghosts —at the play!"

"In short," continued my cousin, not noticing the interruption, "romances, 'it has been justly observed,' are histories which we do *not* believe to be true, whilst histories are romances which we *do* believe to be true."

"I do not believe a word of it," said my uncle. "Do you mean to tell me, Nick, that the labyrinth, and the clue, and the queen, and the poison, are not all as true as that you are sitting there?"

The baronet, if little versed in the lucubrations of Rapin and Hume, was "well up" in "Robin Hood's Garland," "Rosamond's Bower," and the "Seven Champions of Christendom."

"I mean, sir," returned the undergraduate, "that modern research has gone far to prove the contrary."

"Prove it!—you can as soon prove that the moon is made of green cheese, or that I am sitting on the other side of the table!"

"So you are, Sir Oliver," quoth Nicholas, coolly. "Logic, my dear sir, will prove that, or anything else, at Oxford."

"That I am on the other side of the table?" asked the astounded baronet.

"Clearly, sir; for instance, you admit that the table has two sides."

"Of course."

"And that I am sitting on one side of it?"

"Well, puppy!"

"Then, sir, you are most decidedly sitting on the other. Logic, my dear sir, logic will prove anything!"

"Logic be ——!" said Sir Oliver. He was conquered, but not convinced, and, like most people in a similar predicament, began to be angry, when Hanbury came to the rescue, and diverted the storm by volunteering to read, for the edification of the party, a poem, which he said he had just sent in, as being one of the candidates for the University prize: it commenced—

"Fronde novâ viridis mea tempora cingo salicti
Cursus dum volvunt annus et una dies.
Si quæris, dubitans, cur sic mea tempora cingo?
Impromptu causa est—Cara Amaryllis abest!" &c.

I shall not inflict the whole of the poem on my readers, merely observing that my Cousin Nicholas, still performing the part of interpreter, rendered it pathetically into English, as they punted slowly down the stream homewards under the auspices of the redoubted Dan Stewart :—

"It's all round my hat I wear the green willow,
All round my hat, for a twelvemonth and a day—
And if any one asks me the reason why I wear it?
It is because my true love is far, far away!" &c.

CHAPTER XVIII.

His cogitative faculties immersed
In cogibundity of cogitation!
Chrononhotonthologos.

Sweet 's the love that meets return?
Old Song.

CONSTERNATION.—OBJURGATION.—SEPARATION.—VISITATION.—PEREGRINATION.—MEDITATION.—EXPLANATION.—RESTORATION.—DECLARATION.

Amidst objects of such interesting speculation, time flew quickly on, till the approach of the vacation; and the baronet at length prepared to return to London, accompanied by his son, George Hanbury making a third in the post-chaise.

To this young gentleman, as I have already hinted, did Sir Oliver "seriously incline:" he had, in the simplicity of his heart, become much attached to him, and was not a little glad of his company; nor did he fail to give him a pressing invitation to continue their *compagnon de voyage* as far as the Hall, where he promised him a hearty welcome.

Hanbury, in return, expressed himself much pleased with the prospect of paying him a visit in the country, and pledged himself to do so as soon as he should have paid his respects to a maiden aunt, to whom he lay under

very great obligations, and who might fancy herself slighted should he fail to pass the first week of the vacation, as usual, at her house in the vicinity of Brighton.

Sir Oliver gave him great credit for his dutiful attention to so respectable a relative, and before the party reached town had even granted his consent that my cousin should accompany him down to Frump Paddock, on the express condition that both the young men should repair to the Hall at the end of the above-named period; Nicholas at the same time averring that no doubt the invigorating air of the South Downs and the sea-breezes would prove of material benefit to his still debilitated frame, and increase considerably the efficacy of "Huxham's Tincture."

On reaching the metropolis, Sir Oliver drove immediately to our old quarters at the Tavistock, and inquired for me. His surprise was nearly equal to his disappointment at finding that I had left London without waiting his return; nor did these sensations experience any abatement when he had perused the letter which I had left at the bar, with directions that it should be presented to him on his arrival. My good uncle was indeed completely puzzled by its contents, and, after reading and re-reading it at least half a dozen times, remained for full five minutes in a state of self-communing deliberation, which, from some real or fancied peculiarity of hue communicated by its influence to the visage, the world has agreed to particularize by the name of a "brown study."

His mental abstraction was indeed for a time so considerable, as to induce a suspicion among his companions that a nap, which had more than once seemed to meditate an attack upon him during their journey, had at length succeeded in making his senses captive to its overpowering influence,—the only circumstance which militated against this idea being the want of that musical accompaniment, the harmony of whose tones was usually co-existent with the first approaches of the drowsy deity upon Sir Oliver.

The chain of his ideas—if that expression may be used where concatenation or order there was none—gave way at length before my Cousin Nicholas, who, in his politest

manner, offered his father a pinch of snuff. My uncle took it mechanically, slowly raising his eyes from the fender on which they had been fixed, and staring him full in the face, but without speaking. Nicholas had emptied the cayenne pepper-caster into his box; the titillating pungency was productive of the happiest effects; Sir Oliver was roused at once from his "handsome fix;" he sneezed, and unclosed his lips.

"Why, what, in the d—l's name, can be the meaning of all this?—'Circumstances which he can neither explain nor control.'—'Lord Manningham prejudiced'—why, what does the puppy mean?"

"Upon my word, Sir Oliver," replied my cousin, who, from the direction of my uncle's eyes as he uttered this ejaculation, supposed, or chose to suppose, the query addressed to himself, "your question is somewhat difficult to answer, and the rather as it is perfectly impossible for me to form a probable conjecture as to its subject; but if you will allow me to inspect that mysterious epistle, which seems to have given birth to it, I shall be extremely happy to give you every elucidation in my power."

"Indeed, sir, I shall do no such thing; what business is it of yours, pray?—but I'll get to the bottom of it—I *will* have an answer!"

"Before I know the question, sir?"

"Hold your tongue, you scoundrel, and don't put me into a passion; the dog has given me the slip, but I'll——"

"Oh, sir, is that it?" quoth Nicholas; "then, in my humble opinion, Sir Oliver, the best method you can adopt will be to advertise him immediately, with a suitable reward for his recovery,—d—d careless rascals, these waiters!—I dare say, if the truth was known, they have sold him;—is it Don or Carlo, Sir Oliver?"

The quickness of my cousin's eye enabled him to avoid the sudden impetus of the baronet's cane, which would otherwise, in all probability, have produced a serious contusion on his pericranium; as it was, the blow spent itself in empty air, but not before it had destroyed in its progress a glass of sherry-negus, which, having been

unadvisedly placed too near the edge of the table, came within the compass of the parabola described by the walking-stick.

For once this facetious young gentleman had overshot his mark. Sir Oliver, being far from quick-sighted, was not unfrequently taken in, by the serious demeanour of his son and heir, so as to give implicit credit to a gravity too profound to excite his suspicion; but, on the present occasion, not all the good baronet's *bonhomie* and gullibility, of which, to say the truth, he certainly possessed a very respectable share, could prevent his seeing that Nicholas was indulging his wit at his expense; and the conviction of this not only occasioned the destruction of the aforesaid rummer of negus, but also of an article by no means less fragile—to wit, the small remains of patience which the perusal of my "unaccountable" letter had left in Sir Oliver's possession.

All the influence which young Hanbury had acquired was for a while insufficient to check or divert the storm, the whole fury of which was directed against the head of the audacious and provoking delinquent; at length, however, his interference prevailed so far as to allay something of the baronet's anger, while the remainder was diverted into a different channel, and, by degrees, "in hollow murmurs died away."

This portion of his wrath Sir Oliver was rather at a loss to find a proper object for. It appeared pretty clear to him that he had ample reason to be very much offended with somebody, but whether Lord Manningham or myself was the legitimate character on whom his wrath ought to devolve, was a point which he found it rather difficult to make up his mind upon at present. One of the two, it was pretty certain, must deserve a considerable degree of vituperation at his hands; and therefore, in order that, through a weak and ill-judged lenity, the real offender might not escape his justice, he scattered his blessings with no sparing hand, and with a tolerably impartial distribution, on the heads of both of us, declaring his fixed determination of calling on the viscount the first thing he did in the morning, for the purpose of obtaining from him

a categorical explanation of what he was pleased to term, "my d—d absurdity."

His first intention was, indeed, to proceed to Grosvenor Square forthwith; nor was it without some difficulty that he was induced, by the reiterated representations of both his companions, to delay his visit, on the ground that seven o'clock in the afternoon was rather an inconvenient hour to call upon a nobleman, who would by that time, in all probability, be thinking of his dinner.

Sir Oliver yielded rather to the repetition than the justice of these arguments, and at length suffered himself to be so far mollified as to defer his expedition till the following day, when he desired Nicholas to be prepared to accompany him; but a letter unexpectedly arriving the next morning for Hanbury, written from Frump Paddock, and announcing the sudden indisposition of his revered relative, that exemplary and affectionate young man found it absolutely necessary to depart with all speed into Sussex, carrying with him his estimable friend, at least a couple of hours previous to Sir Oliver's quitting his pillow.

He left, however, a note, inclosed in another from my Cousin Nicholas, stating the unfortunate emergency which had called him so suddenly away, and the impossibility of his depriving himself of the consolations of friendship, should the unhappy malady of his aunt terminate in a manner, the possibility of which he shuddered to contemplate. He added, moreover, that their joint unwillingness to disturb Sir Oliver after so fatiguing a journey had prevented their personally soliciting a concurrence which they knew he would not refuse, and concluded by promising to rejoin him at the Hall the instant the present alarm should have subsided.

Uncle Bullwinkle hardly knew what to make of all this when the letter was presented to him on his rising, and the strong inclination he again felt to "anathematize," rendered shaving a particularly unpleasant and somewhat dangerous operation; the quick contraction and expansion of the muscles about his mouth called for the exercise of all the professional experience and dexterity of the ope-

rator, notwithstanding the additional degree of steadiness afforded to his hand by the precautionary grasp of that particular part of the human countenance which gentlemen of his profession alone are allowed to handle with impunity; nor, indeed, could all his care and ability prevent his patient's occasionally absorbing a most unpalatable proportion of suds, when the mouth, he felt so invincible an inclination to open, would, more than once in spite of himself, unclose during the rapid evolutions of the brush, as if on purpose to receive the savoury *bonne bouche.*

As soon as my Uncle Oliver was shaved, and had consigned to the recesses of his interior some half-dozen eggs and a couple of French rolls, with a proportionate quantity of cold boiled beef and mustard, he proceeded to liquefy the same with half a cup of tea, and a whole quart of ale, a moderate repast, which he contrived to despatch in something less than half an hour, or, to use the language of the racing calendar, "performed it with ease in nine-and-twenty minutes," much to the satisfaction of himself, and the undisguised admiration of the waiters.

Being now in high condition for the work of the day, he began to think of putting into execution his resolve of the preceding evening, and prepared for a visit to Lord Manningham.

At the period of which I am speaking, the luxury of the hackney-chariot, the celerity of the cab, and the economy of the omnibus, were yet sleeping in the womb of Time; my uncle's two-shilling fare was therefore of necessity performed in one of those shattered and shattering vehicles which modern refinement denominates "a Misery," in contradistinction to its most elegant rival, the chariot, since, in the nomenclature of fashion, technically designated as "a Swell."

The coach which conveyed Sir Oliver to Grosvenor Square was one more execrable "than all its tribe," and no enfranchised debtor, rushing from the melancholy purlieus of the Fleet or the Marshalsea, ever stretched his limbs in greater ecstasy at deliverance from durance vile, than did the baronet on emerging from his crazy recep-

tacle, which, in imitation of the celebrated and affable Mrs. Gilpin,—though from a motive totally opposed to the one which influenced that exemplary matron,*—he had directed to "draw up some three doors off" the mansion which was to be the limit of his journey.

Lord Manningham, fortunately for the preservation of the baronet's equanimity, was at home and disengaged; and his visitor, on sending in his name, was immediately ushered into an elegant breakfast-room, with something more of respect than a supercilious gentleman's gentleman seemed previously disposed to pay to his old-fashioned figure and costume. Here he found his noble host, with his lovely daughter, in the act of concluding a morning's repast, not quite so substantial as that from which he had himself so lately risen.

The frank and cordial reception given him by the peer tended not a little to increase the embarrassment under which Sir Oliver laboured, from not having been able to make up his mind as to the precise demeanour which it became him, in his present state of uncertainty, to assume; but when he received the smiling and affectionate welcome of his beautiful niece, the affair was settled at once, and the air of reserve he had thought it necessary to attempt to put on (an air no one in this world was less calculated to maintain for five minutes) vanished immediately. Loaded, as he was, to the very muzzle, with queries and expostulations, it was some time before he was fairly able to fire a single shot, or get into a discussion of the matter which was uppermost in his mind.

Miss Stafford at length quitted the room, in obedience to a hint from her father, and Sir Oliver disembogued his whole cataract of surprise and wonderment at finding only an inexplicable letter from me, at the hotel, instead of myself, *in propriâ personâ*, domesticated, as he fully expected I should be, in Grosvenor Square.

* The morning came, the chaise was brought,
But yet was not allow'd
To drive up to the door, lest all
Should say that she was proud!
COWPER.

If the good baronet was before puzzled, Lord Manningham's recital of the events declared to have taken place so recently in the family, did not much contribute to disperse the clouds by which he was obfuscated, while his own account of the loss of my first letter of introduction, and his journey to London as the bearer of a second, which, too, it appeared, had never reached its destination, produced in turn full as great an effect upon his auditor, who, to judge by the expression of doubt and surprise visible in his countenance as he steadfastly regarded the narrator, seemed to be balancing the probabilities, *pro* and *con.*, of the sanity of Sir Oliver's intellects.

How long they might have continued in this state of mutual perplexity it is impossible to say, had not a thundering application at the hall-door attracted their attention at this moment, in spite of the interest excited by their debate, when the entrance of a third person upon the scene, and the tidings of which he was the bearer, for a time rendered their "confusion worse confounded."

This interloper was Eustace Fortescue. His arrival was by no means *mal-à-propos*. Sir Oliver, fully convinced of the physical impossibility of my having acted in the manner laid to my charge, and at the same time confounded by the positive testimony and circumstantial details of his lordship, had become—a necessary consequence with him whenever he found himself thoroughly mystified—passing wrathful; nor is it to be doubted but that a breach,—perhaps an irreparable one,—might have taken place between my two uncles but for this opportune interruption.

At first, indeed, Fortescue's disclosures had the effect of increasing the irritation of both parties; but soon the alarm which Sir Oliver began to entertain for the life of one so dear to him as I had become, and the newly-awakened fears of Lord Manningham that an imposition might really have been practised on him, combined to render them both more amenable to the laws of reason.

Sir Oliver, to whom the possibility of the latter circumstance had never suggested itself, had contented himself with briefly denying the whole of his lordship's story in

the aggregate,—or, as he phrased it, "in the lump,"—and the consequent indignation of the peer at the more than implied doubts of his veracity, together with the rage of the baronet at the supposed calumnies heaped upon his favourite nephew, now gradually sunk from fever-heat to a much more moderate temperature, and the threatened storm subsided into something resembling a calm.

It was eventually agreed that his lordship's travelling-carriage should be got ready with as much despatch as a due regard to the mutual convenience of the parties would allow, for the purpose of adjourning that conclave to the spot where alone this intricate and mysterious affair could receive its elucidation.

Terrified at the idea of my danger, Sir Oliver was anxious to start without delay. Nobly eager to atone for an error he began to anticipate he must have fallen into, and shocked at its melancholy consequences, Lord Manningham was no less desirous of setting out immediately; but the latter strenuously urged and entreated Fortescue, whose haggard looks evinced the distress of mind and fatigue of body which he had recently undergone, to defer his journey back until exhausted nature should have derived a new supply of vigour from refreshment and repose. In this desire, however, he was vehemently opposed by the object of his solicitude, who declared, with an air of determination which showed the vanity of remonstrance, that no power on earth should induce him to lay his head upon his pillow, until he had ascertained beyond all dispute, whether I was indeed the most wronged, and he the most ungrateful of mankind.

It was evident that farther opposition would only irritate without being effectual: Lord Manningham, therefore, gave a reluctant assent to his making one of the party, and at the earnest request of Miss Stafford, she also was allowed to occupy the vacant corner in the carriage.

Commenced under such auspices, it can scarcely be imagined that the journey down to Underdown Hall would be productive of much pleasure or amusement to any individual of the *quartet*, and the whole party must have experienced no inconsiderable degree of relief when

a turning in the road presented to the eye of Amelia a village spire, rising above a tufted knoll, which Sir Oliver announced to be that of the parish church of Underdown.

A few minutes brought them down the avenue of lofty trees which formed the majestic approach to the house, and the worthy baronet, whose anxiety for me made him forgetful of etiquette in all its branches, sprang from the carriage with more agility than could fairly have been expected from even a foxhunter of his time of life. His earnest inquiries were, however, so satisfactorily answered, that, checking the strong inclination which he felt to proceed instantly to my apartment, he contented himself with returning to his *compagnons de voyage*, and declaring the good tidings he had heard, as he sorely embarrassed every one of them by encumbering them with his assistance in their descent.

The party had been for some time assembled in the Cedar-parlour, and a salutation, not less affecting than sincere, had taken place between my mother, Lord Manningham, and his daughter, before it was perceived that one of the company was missing.

The varied and strong emotions which combined to agitate the bosom of Mrs. Stafford at thus unexpectedly meeting with the only surviving and favourite brother of a husband whose memory was enshrined in her very inmost soul;—the recollection which unavoidably forced itself upon the mind of that brother, how nearly the widow of his beloved Charles had, from circumstances in which he bore so prominent a part, been deprived of all that now remained to make life valuable to her,—all conspired to render the interview so painfully pleasing to themselves, and so interesting to those who witnessed it, that some time had elapsed ere Sir Oliver, who first recovered his composure, discovered that Major Fortescue had left the room.

Divining the quarter to which his footsteps would be directed, Lord Manningham moved an immediate adjournment to the sick-room, declaring his impatience to do justice to a nephew, whom he now felt convinced he had

so unintentionally contributed to injure, and to obtain his pardon for the annoyance so unwittingly inflicted.

Sir Oliver volunteered to officiate as master of the ceremonies on this interesting occasion; and Sir Robert Chester, or Beau Nash himself, could scarcely have exhibited greater alacrity—I say nothing as to grace—than he did in conducting his noble visitor up the great staircase towards my apartment; nor, although in the course of his progress he had to traverse the whole length of the "Northern Gallery," did the kind-hearted old man pause one instant to introduce to his new friend's acquaintance a single one of the illustrious Bullwinkles who smiled or frowned, according to their respective sexes, upon its walls. Never, I may safely venture to affirm, had a similar mark of inattention to our renowned progenitors taken place since he had filled the dignified post of their representative; and strong, indeed, must have been the impulse of that affection which could carry him, as it did on this occasion, through their ranks at the *pas de charge* with such a listener as Lord Manningham immediately in his wake. A slight motion of one hand did, it is true, direct the eye of the latter to the panoply of the ever-glorious Roger; but as the other, at the same instant, turned the handle of the last intervening door, a momentary glance only was permitted to his lordship before he found himself, as before stated, face to face with the individual respecting whom his sentiments had so recently undergone a second revolution.

Our interview might probably have been prolonged to a much greater extent than it was, but for the interposition of Drench, who, having called to make his daily visit, declared that the increased action of my pulse rendered a longer continuance of the conversation at present unadvisable.

The departure of my visitors did not, however, immediately produce that return of tranquillity which the doctor had anticipated; and, with all due respect for my little friend's skill in diagnostics, I am led to believe that the circumstance of my now at last finding myself domiciled under the same roof with her who had laid so

forcible a hold on my affections, had at least as great a share in accelerating the current of my blood, as the hearty, not to say boisterous, felicitations of Uncle Oliver, or the milder, but not less interesting, remarks of my newly-found relative.

Miss Manningham herself did not "show" during the whole of that to me long, long day; her "compliments to her cousin" were, however, duly consigned to me through the medium of Miss Pyefinch, and with this trifling manifestation of her remembrance I was compelled to remain satisfied for the present; but I cannot flatter the learned advisers of this temporary secession with the success of their experiment, nor dare I assert that my couch was rendered less restless in consequence, or my slumbers earlier or more prolonged.

Such, however, is the domination of mind over matter, that, in spite of an almost sleepless night, I was pronounced on the following morning not to have suffered from the excitement of the preceding day; on the contrary, Dr. Drench declared me to be decidedly better in every respect, adding, with a very pardonable degree of self-complacency, that he "perceived the composing draught he had sent in had done me no harm."

With this his expressed opinion I most cordially agreed; nor could I, either in truth or gratitude, refuse my assent to the proposition, inasmuch as the draught thus lauded was, together with some four-and-twenty of its fellows "all in a row,"—and all, no doubt, equally efficacious,—adorning at that very moment the uppermost shelf of a contiguous closet.

The force of sympathy it were heresy to doubt; the bare glance of a medical man will, it is admitted, operate *per se* in many disorders (among which the toothache stands conspicuous), so as to produce instantaneous convalescence; the sight of a "green and yellow" dose—that hue which the Bard has immortalized as the one peculiar to melancholy—had ever a most unaccountable effect upon my nerves; Martha's complicity and co-operation had been, with some difficulty, secured; Miss Pyefinch's attentions, and lumps of sugar, had been

evaded, as well as the jalap whose unsavoury flavour their sweetness was designed to counteract; on a good constitution and rigid abstinence I relied for keeping down fever, and,—in utter disregard of that skittle-ground system of the faculty which treats a patient like a nine-pin, first knocking him down for the purpose of afterwards setting him up again,—persisted in getting well again my own way.

My recovery was proportionably rapid, as little time was wasted in regaining a strength which I had never, to any serious degree, parted with; while all that was yet wanting the vivifying smiles of my beautiful cousin more than supplied.

Our first interview, of course, took place in the presence of the "members of the Seniority;" little room was consequently left for the expression of sentiment on the one side, or sympathy on the other; but no sooner did my amended health allow me to promenade in the grounds, than I seized with eagerness the first opportunity which presented itself, to assure my fair associate —for Amelia was now become the kind companion of my walks—that there was far "more peril in her eye than twenty of their pistols,—or pestles."

I recounted to her, with all the ardour of a first and only love, the sensations I had experienced on our first and never-to-be-forgotten interview. I assured her of the permanency as well as the vividness of my flame; and, having given full vent to my passion in a very respectable ebullition of bombastic prose,—I never could compass the poetic flights of Nicholas,—received at length my delicious reward, in beholding the "diamond eyes," whose brilliancy I had duly adverted to, cast modestly upon the green turf, and the "roseate cheeks" blushing with a tenfold glow, as the ecstatic reference to "papa" fell from the "ruby lips," inaudible to any other ears save those of love.

The result of the reference thus kindly given, may be easily anticipated; Lord Manningham, in whose good graces I had risen, perhaps the more rapidly from his previous disappointment, shook me warmly by the hand,

and candidly avowed that our union was of all things the one nearest to his heart.

The placid smile, which once more resumed its place upon my mother's countenance, evinced a joy not the less real from being quiet. Sir Oliver rubbed his hands till the friction set them in a fine glow, and farther evinced his satisfaction in a noisy good-humour, which, though it sometimes annoyed Amelia, and even myself, it was impossible to find fault with. Even Captain Pyefinch mustered up words sufficient to convey his congratulations in a brief but emphatic "wish ye all joy," while his sister incontinently took out a virgin crowquill—alack! the ruby-pointed Rhodio-Perryan pens were then nonentities —and on a sheet of rose-coloured paper, beautifully embossed round the edges, and highly perfumed with musk, set herself seriously about the task of composing an *epithalamium*. I regret much that I am prevented from delighting my readers with this *morceau*. The only copy was consumed by an (accidental) fire: it had, as I remember, a very fair proportion of "roses" and "posies," and "blisses" and "kisses;" but Tom Moore has since thrown all these things completely into the shade.

The interval between "acceptation" and the final riveting of the matrimonial fetters has been by some styled the happiest portion of our lives: this is a position which I shall not at present stop to consider. To those who have *not* gone through the probation, the argument would be uninteresting; to those who *have*, unnecessary. Of the conversations which occupied the attention of my now affianced bride and myself during our rambles I shall say nothing, save that in the course of them I found all my suspicions as to the real author of the "jolly good hoax" played off upon herself and her father amply confirmed.

She told me that my pseudo-representative was the same personage whom she had seen in my company at the theatre: of course, it needed not the description of his vermilion *chevelure*, and picturesque obliquity of vision, to settle the question as to the identity of Nicholas.

Of this pleasant young gentleman we had heard

nothing; and the impatience of Sir Oliver on this account vented itself occasionally in angry ejaculations at his prolonged absence, especially after he had himself written to "Frump Paddock," announcing the visit of Lord Manningham to the Hall, and summoning its illustrious heir home, for the purpose of assisting in doing the honours.

The cause of Nicholas's silence and continued stay I could, of course, well divine; but as I saw no good that could possibly arise from denouncing him, while the discovery of his audacity would assuredly go far to distress and harass my kind uncle, I resolved not to expose him, at least for the present, reserving to myself the privilege of lecturing him pretty handsomely whenever I might be favoured with his company, and of using the power which my possession of his secret would give me to restrain his mischievous propensities for the future.

CHAPTER XIX.

Your castle is surprised, your wife and babes
Savagely slaughter'd!—
* * * * *
Wife, children, servants,—all that could be found!
Macbeth.

There are more things in Heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.
Hamlet.

AN IN-COMING LANDLORD.—AN OUT-GOING TENANT.—MURDER AND ARSON.—THE UNKINDEST CUT OF ALL.—AN ESCAPE "NOBODY KNOWS HOW."—A NURSE AND A NURSELING.—BOYS AND GIRLS.—PHILOSOPHY AND MADNESS.—A "LITTLE GO" FROM OXFORD TO HINDOSTAN.—BATTLE, MURDER, AND SUDDEN DEATH!—THE LIVELIEST CHAPTER IN THE BOOK.

It was in the course of a long *tête-à-tête* ramble that I first learned from Amelia those particulars of the history of Fortescue with which she was herself acquainted. The father of Eustace, a distant relation of Lady Manningham, had been the proprietor of a small landed estate,

situate in one of the south-western provinces of the sister island, the greater part of which, being fond of agricultural pursuits, he kept in his own hands, letting off the remainder to tenants at an easy rent.

In no science, perhaps, has real or fancied improvement made greater progress of late years than in that of husbandry ; and although the substitution of mechanical for manual labour had not then reached the height to which it has since attained, yet enough had already been done to excite among the lower classes of agriculturists a considerable distaste for inventions calculated, as they conceived, to deprive them of employment.

Mr. Fortescue, naturally of a speculative turn of mind, was one of the principal encouragers, not only of these ingenious contrivances, but of every new method of managing land which the theorists of the day suggested,—partly, perhaps, from a very natural wish to improve a property by no means too large for his expenditure, and partly, perhaps, from the very circumstance that it *was* new—one great reason for its exciting the dislike and disdain of his Milesian neighbours, many of whom, doubtless, would consider the application of traces to a plough an impious interference with the designs of Providence, which had furnished the horse with a tail to tie it to.

But for one unfortunate circumstance, however, it is questionable whether his new-fangled mode of farming would have experienced any more serious interruption than such as might have proceeded from its own occasional inefficiency ; but this one was unluckily so fraught with mischief, that not only the experiments, but the experimentalist himself, fell at length a sacrifice to it. The patronage which he extended to machinery only made him unpopular,—the expulsion of an idle and dissolute tenant cost him his life.

A cottager of the name of Donovan had for many years occupied a small portion of ground under both his father and himself. When, soon after the death of the former, Mr. Fortescue, now in possession of the estate, commenced farming on his own account, this man had stood pre-eminent among those who declared that "no

raal gintleman" would have thought of such a measure, and had ever since nourished towards his new landlord a sentiment of angry dislike, which he had scarcely taken the trouble to conceal.

Donovan himself possessed all the vices of the class to which he belonged, without any of their good qualities: he was idle, dissolute, and revengeful, holding the whole race of Fortescue in detestation as "Cromwellians," strangers, upstarts, and usurpers of yesterday — alien intruders upon the soil from which the rightful occupants had been expelled.

To feelings of this description it was only necessary that some motives of a personal nature should be added in order to rouse his scarcely-slumbering passions, and cause them to explode. These motives, unhappily, were at length not wanting.

The idleness of Donovan, the slovenly state of the land in his occupation, which, by its sterility and miserable appearance, seemed actually to disgrace the rich pastures and highly-cultivated fields of his landlord that surrounded them,—his constant absence at rent-day, and the impossibility of ever extracting a shilling from him but by distraining; and lastly,—although Fortescue would never have admitted it as a reason,—his open opposition to, and derision of, a favourite drill-plough, at length induced the proprietor, in an evil hour for himself and his family, to eject this unprofitable tenant from his farm, which he forthwith added to the one already retained in his own occupation.

Perhaps it was fortunate for the numerous applicants who desired to be the successors of Donovan in the land that he did so, as the man had been heard to observe that whoever took "the place" over his head should be at no loss for a housewarming. Certain it is, that three months had not elapsed from the date of the ejectment alluded to, when the habitation of the unhappy Fortescue was entered at the dead of night by a band of ruffians, among whom his savage exultation but too plainly displayed Donovan as pre-eminent, in spite of his besmeared features and the disguise of a smock-frock worn over his

other habiliments. Indeed, from the character and disposition of the man, it may well be doubted whether he would have considered his vengeance as complete had his victim died in ignorance of the hand that struck the blow.

Not to dwell longer on a scene so dreadful and revolting, suffice it to say that the sun, which had gilt with its declining beams the cheerful, comfortable-looking homestead of Mount Kavenagh, rose on a blackened pile of smoking ruins, from which the scorched remains of the owner were afterwards drawn forth, the skull exhibiting a long and deep fracture, apparently produced by a blow from a scythe or pole-axe. The half-consumed bodies of his young wife and two infant children were subsequently discovered, and all consigned in the same day to one common grave.

Of the domestics, two, who had ventured to raise their hands in defence of "the master," had also perished; the rest, including the nurse, had saved themselves by flight, the latter bearing with her the young Eustace, but not before the terrified child had witnessed with horror the destruction of both his parents. His very escape, indeed, appeared a miracle, and could only be accounted for on the presumption that a story, which came some time afterwards to be whispered about, had its foundation in fact.

This secret tale insinuated that Edith, who so courageously bore away the only surviving scion of her master's stock, was aided in eluding the general massacre of the family by a devoted swain of her own, who had carried his regard for her so far as to become a member of the murderous crew principally, if not solely, for the purpose of preserving his *innamorata*, and who, finding her obstinate in refusing to fly without her foster-child, assisted her in rescuing him, and gave the pair a temporary asylum in his own cottage.

The truth or falsehood of this account Edith would never directly admit or deny, even to Lady Manningham, who received her and her *protégé*, and in whose family the young Fortescue was thenceforth brought up.

The arm of the law was on this occasion stretched forth in vain to bring the murderous assassins to condign pun-

ishment. Donovan, the only one among them whom Edith could or would identify, was nowhere to be found, nor was it until some considerable time had elapsed that intelligence, authentic or fictitious, reached Ireland that he had perished in a vessel which suffered shipwreck on its voyage to America.

The young Fortescue in the meantime was carefully tended and educated by Lord Manningham (who acted in every respect as his natural guardian), along with his own children, of whom he had at that period but two.

Frederic Stafford, then an only son, was delighted with a companion of his own age, while Matilda, the daughter, soon learned to feel for the youthful stranger an affection of even a stronger nature than that which she experienced towards her own more boisterous brother; and when the two boys, under the superintendence of a private tutor, were at length removed to a public school, it may be doubted whether, in spite of the acknowledged depression produced among young gentlemen and their mammas by the recurrence of "Black Monday," her little heart were not the saddest in the family.

These feelings were more than returned by the object of them. During all his vacations Matilda was the cherished companion of his walks, his sports, and, to a certain extent, even of his studies; while the more giddy Frederic, an utter stranger to that melancholy pensiveness which, from the fatal night so memorable in his history, had never entirely faded from the countenance of his friend, failed not constantly to rally him on account of what he was in the habit of designating his "apron-string propensities," which so often left himself without the associate he would have preferred in his field-sports and out-of-door amusements.

Time flew rapidly on. Lord Manningham's regiment was ordered on foreign service; and as the place of its destination was one of those colonies the distance of which from the mother country renders a frequent change of troops expensive and unadvisable, the gallant soldier made up his mind to bid a long adieu to his family and friends.

To this arrangement, however, his attached wife could by no means be brought to consent. Though occupied by the cares attending a young family, which, since Fortescue's introduction to it, "had increased, and was increasing," she hesitated not to declare her unalterable resolution of accompanying her husband whithersoever his duty might call him. Inwardly rejoicing at a determination which his heart sanctioned while his head disapproved, a but half-reluctant acquiescence was at length wrung from the viscount by her entreaties, and the whole family embarked together, including Frederic, for whom his father had now procured a commission in his own corps.

Unwilling to be separated from almost all the friends he had ever known, Eustace earnestly entreated to be allowed to accompany them on their voyage; but this his guardian positively refused, as well as his request to be permitted to enter the army at all, till time should decide whether the wish which he now expressed to that effect were indeed the offspring of a decided preference for a military life, or a mere boyish fancy, hastily and inconsiderately adopted, in the hope of still remaining among the friends and companions of his youth.

Perhaps it might have been better for Fortescue had his inclinations not been at this time thwarted. It is true, that for some time after the departure of the Staffords, he continued to apply himself to his studies with a greater share of industry than was exhibited by nine-tenths of his equals in age, and that he derived from his ability and application much solid and useful information; but it is also true, that, in spite of what our "New Lights" may aver, the fruits of the Tree of Knowledge are not all of a wholesome description;—many bitter crabs are to be found engrafted among its pippins; and poor Eustace Fortescue gathered but too many of a kind, to minds of a temperament like his own, of all others, perhaps, the most deleterious.

I have already alluded to the serious and even melancholy turn which his disposition had taken, while yet he was a boy—the natural effect of the catastrophe he had witnessed, and so narrowly escaped. The tales of

Edith, herself a mine of legendary lore, had not, even in his childhood, tended to diminish his propensity to the sombre and the marvellous; Fetches and Banshees, the warnings of good angels and the shrieking of bad ones, "black spirits and white, blue spirits and gray," omens, prognostications, and presentiments of death or desolation, with all the mysterious machinery of an invisible world, formed no slight portion of Edith's creed. The very act which drove her and her foster-child from the paternal hearth, had been as plainly predicted to her as death-watches, dreams, and candle-snuffs could shadow it forth; nor can it be for one moment supposed, that all this valuable stock of information on supernatural subjects should remain a secret from him, whom the very fact of her having saved his life had contributed doubly to endear.

It is true that Lady Manningham, a woman of strong natural sense and cultivated mind, did much to neutralize this delicious poison, while added years did more. Edith, too, the warmhearted and affectionate Edith, was called to a world where her fidelity and numerous good qualities would receive their reward before her foster-child had doffed his jacket for that modern *toga virilis*, "the Long-tailed Coat."* Early impressions, however, once made,

* The recognition of incipient manhood indicated by the donation of this garment has ever been considered a most important and much desiderated event by the ingenuous youth of Britain. It will not perhaps be thought impertinent to the "whereabouts" of my Cousin Nicholas if I venture to subjoin Miss Pyefinch's celebration of his assumption of the symbol, as extracted from the album of that votary of the Muses, to which I have before had occasion to allude. It is entitled

NICK'S LONG-TAIL'D COAT.

Modo sumptâ veste virili.—HORACE.

Zooks! I must woo the Muse to-day,
Though line before I'd never wrote;
Ask you what theme demands the lay?
OUR NICK HAS GOT A LONG-TAIL'D COAT!!

Not the coatee which soldiers wear,
Tight button'd up beneath the throat,
But easy, flowing, *debonnair*,
In short, a *civil* Long-tail'd Coat!

are not easily effaced; visionary musings continued occasionally to body forth to his mind's eye "the forms of things unseen;" nor even in after-days could Fortescue ever entirely divest himself of certain undefinable feelings respecting influences and intelligences above mere mortality, and more nearly allied to superstition than to experience.

Whether Eustace might not have eventually outgrown this unlucky twist in his moral organization, as reason and education came more fully into play, is a point difficult to be decided; since, after the departure of his friend Frederic Stafford, he formed an acquaintance, which soon ripened into intimacy, with another of his old schoolfellows, a young man, whose turn of mind did much to

One smarter you'll not find in town,
Cut by Nugee, that snip of note,—
A very quiet olive-brown
's the colour of Nick's Long-tail'd Coat!

Gay jackets clothe the stately Pole,
The proud Hungarian, and the Croat,
Yet Esterhazy, on the whole,
Looks smartest in a Long-tail'd Coat.

Lord Byron most admired, we know,
The Albanian dress, or Sulliote;
But he lived much abroad, and so
He never saw Nick's Long-tail'd Coat.

Or else that noble poet's theme
Had never been the "White Capote,"
Had he once view'd, in Fancy's dream,
The glories of Nick's Long-tail'd Coat!

We also know on Highland kilt
Poor dear Glengarry used to doat,
And had esteem'd it actual guilt
I' the "Gael" to wear a Long-tail'd Coat.

And well it might his eyes annoy;
Monkbarns himself could never quote
"Sir Robert Sibbald," "Gordon," "Roy,"
Or "Stukely," for a Long-tail'd Coat!

But though the fleet red-deer to chase,
Or guide o'er Highland lock the boat,
A jacket's well enough,—for grace
There's nothing like Nick's Long-tail'd Coat!

resuscitate and encourage the half-extinguished errors of his own.

Henry Lambert, the only son of a sectarian father, was a few years older than Eustace. He had early imbibed the wildest fancies of the enthusiastic Swedenborg, and became deeply versed in all the half-crazy mysticism of "the Baron's" followers. Dreams, visions, and all the fantastic imagery of his own immaterial world, were, of course, poured by wholesale into the ready ears of his new friend. On a soil already so well prepared, such seed could not fail of taking root, and bringing forth fruit in rank and precocious abundance. Sympathy became the connecting link between them, and together they plunged into the most recondite *penetralia* of

Of course, in climbing up a tree,
On terra firma or afloat,
To mount the giddy topmast, he
Would doff awhile his Long-tail'd Coat.

Then whence that supercilious sneer?—
From out your own eye pull the mote,
Fastidious critic!—did *you* ne'er
In youth admire *your* Long-tail'd Coat?

Oh, "Nick's scarce old enough," you mean?—
Why, though too young to have a vote
Or make a will, yet, sure, fifteen
's a ripe age for a Long-tail'd Coat!

What! would you have him sport a chin
Like Colonel Sibthorp or a goat,
Before you think he should begin
To figure in a Long-tail'd Coat?

Suppose he visits France—can he
Sit down at any *table d'hôte*,
With any sort of decency,
Unless he's got a Long-tail'd Coat?

E'en Louis Philippe, royal cit,
There soon may be a *sans-culotte*,
And surely all must then admit
The advantage of a Long-tail'd Coat.

Things are not now as when, of yore,
In tower, encircled by a moat,
Each lion-hearted chieftain wore
A corselet—not a Long-tail'd Coat.

their great apostle, with an ardour increased by being shared.

The better genius of Fortescue, who had so long slept upon his post, at last seemed to awaken from his nap, but shook not off his slumbers before great and, to a certain extent, irreparable mischief had been done to his charge. The friends were separated before the Rosicrucianism—if there be such a word—of one of them, at least, was quite complete. Lambert, whose singular opinions had begun to manifest themselves in certain extravagances of manner and conduct, was closeted one fine morning with his tutor: a longer interview succeeded with the Provost of the College on the following day; and on the next, Henry took his last farewell of Cambridge.

Chain mail his portly form embraced,
Not, like a weasel or a stoat,
"Cribb'd and confined" about the waist,
And pinch'd in as Nick's Long-tail'd Coat.

With beamy spear or biting axe
To right and left he thrust and smote;
Ah! what a change!—no sinewy thwacks
Fall from a modern Long-tail'd Coat!

To stalwart knights, a puny race
Succeeds,—with locks *en papillote*,—
While cuirass, cuisses, greaves, give place
To silk-net "tights" and Long-tail'd Coat!

Worse changes still! now, well-a-day!
A few cant phrases learn'd by rote
Each beardless booby spouts away,
A Solon in a Long-tail'd Coat,—

Prates of the "March of Intellect,"—
The "Schoolmaster,"—a *Patriote*
So noble who could e'er suspect
Had just put on his Long-tail'd Coat?

Alack! alack! that every thick-
-skull'd lad must find an antidote
For England's woes, because, like Nick,
He has put on a Long-tail'd Coat!—

But, lo! my rhymes begin to fail,
Nor dare I longer time devote!
Thus rhyme and time cut off the tale—
The long tale—of NICK'S LONG-TAIL'D COAT!!

Eustace, thus deprived of the associate of his pursuits, once more felt alone in the world; he, too, had undergone the ordeal of an inquiry, naturally suggested by his known intimacy with Lambert; but in him an understanding, originally by no means feeble, had battled strongly with its insidious enemy. Where the fatally perverted intellect of his ally had rioted in full assurance, he had paused in doubt, and even in dismay. The former gave eager and unhesitating credence to every phantasm of the excited brain, because he panted to know it real; the latter shrank from what he dreaded to find true in all the reluctant wretchedness of half-conviction.

The result of Fortescue's examination was so far favourable, that his superior found little to blame, something to pity, but enough to fix him in the opinion that an entire change of scene and pursuits was in the highest degree advisable for the health of the young philosophizer, mental as well as corporeal. For the present, however, he contented himself with writing his opinion to the guardian of his pupil.

Some months elapsed, and at length the very day which acquainted Eustace that his poor friend Lambert had been consigned to the melancholy recesses of a lunatic asylum, brought him also Lord Manningham's consent that he should embrace a military life, should his former inclination to the profession of arms continue unabated.

The loss of the only friend in whom he had been accustomed to confide, the melancholy results which had attended that friend's speculations, and above all the perception that he had himself become an object of scarcely concealed derision to those about him—all induced the youthful visionary eagerly to close with the proposal: all had been prepared in anticipation of his resolve, and a few weeks saw him gazetted to an ensigncy in his Majesty's ——th regiment of infantry.

Thus, at the age of nineteen, did Eustace Fortescue enter the world, a handsome stripling, with a fine person, features, of which the melancholy expression did not detract from their manly beauty, while it added, perhaps, to the interest they inspired—a feeling, generous, and

honourable heart, and an intellect powerful and unclouded on every subject—save one.

The kindness of his disposition, and his high sense of honour, joined to his conciliating and gentlemanly manners, soon won him golden opinions at the mess; while his aptitude and intelligence secured him the respect of his superior officers, who saw with approbation the extent of his acquirements, nor once dreamed of the unfortunate *monomanie* which lay dormant in his mind, while nothing occurred to draw it forth or expose it to observation.

Unwearied assiduity and a retentive memory soon advanced the military neophyte far in the study, theoretical as well as practical, of his new profession. For many of the high-spirited and ingenuous youths with whom he was now thrown into contact, he conceived a regard as sincere as reciprocal; nor was it without some feelings of regret that he at length received permission to absent himself from his regiment, on being appointed aide-de-camp to his noble guardian, now become a general officer, and one whose talents, civil and military, had pointed him out to the Government at home as the man, of all others, peculiarly calculated for a high command in a country where diplomacy was at least as requisite as strategetics.

India, the theatre on which the powerful resources of Lord Manningham's mind were now to be displayed, was at this period in a very ticklish state. A formidable combination among the native chiefs had long been more than suspected: the nature and extent of the confederacy was as yet but imperfectly understood; enough, however, was known to prove, that the prosperity, and even the very existence, of our settlements in the East were menaced.

A cool head, a quick eye, and a vigorous arm, were imperiously called for; and Lord Manningham, who had given such ample proofs of uniting in his own person the various qualities of the statesman and the soldier, had proceeded to the Carnatic.

When Fortescue, too, reached the banks of the Hoogley, he found the family of his benefactor plunged in the deepest affliction. Frederic, his early friend and schoolfellow,

the idolized son of parents whom his death had rendered inconsolable, was no more. A fever, contracted by imprudently bathing while his blood was in a high state of fermentation, had carried him off almost before his danger was suspected.

To his father the blow was indeed a severe one: on this darling son he had been accustomed to look with pride as well as with affection, anticipating in his person the friend and support of his own declining years, as well as the successor to his honours, and the protector of his family. He had seen him grow up to man's estate, volatile indeed, but generous, virtuous, and high-minded, —and, justly confident in the rectitude of his principles, and the sterling qualities of his head and heart, the father contemplated with much less of regret or apprehension the approach of that solemn hour when he should himself be summoned to "go hence, and be no more seen!"

It was fortunate perhaps for Lord Manningham, that the important affairs which at this time forced themselves upon his attention, involving as they did the lives and fortunes of thousands for which he was responsible, compelled him to abstract himself from private griefs, and to devote his undivided energies to the public welfare. Occupation, the best medicine for the wounded heart, is especially so when the welfare of others depends upon it; and by degrees its good effects became apparent. On the parade or at the council-board but little alteration could be detected by a common observer in the general or the politician. His cheek, it is true, was somewhat paler, and an added furrow might be seen upon his brow; but his eye had lost little of its fire, nor, except perhaps when some youthful subaltern, high in health and buoyant in spirit, came suddenly athwart his course, was its lustre dimmed or his tongue perceived to falter. Duty, to which the soldier's mind is disciplined, was beyond all question, too, an able auxiliary in producing this effect; in the private recesses of his own home alone might be detected the wandering glance which, passing from one to other of his remaining children, seemed searching for a face that was not there, till, resting at last upon "the

vacant chair," the sad dropping of the eyelid evinced, as it were, a sudden and painful consciousness that the search was vain.

On Lady Manningham the effect of Frederic's death was not less severe, and far more visible; "her beautiful, her brave," was levelled with the dust, and she bowed indeed beneath the stroke. Time, and the affectionate caresses of her surviving offspring, at length succeeded in restoring in some degree her accustomed tranquillity of manner; but the irrevocable fiat had gone forth—the blow was struck; and, though even years elapsed before its full severity was manifested, the seeds of her eventual dissolution but too surely took their root on the premature grave of her boy.

The arrival of Fortescue was at first most painful to both of the bereaved parents. The wound, as yet uncicatrized, bled afresh at the sight of one by whom were called forth so many reminiscences connected with him who *had been;* yet such, and so inexplicable is the human heart, these very sensations soon acquired a new character, in the words of the son of Fingal, "mournful, yet pleasing to the soul." The well-known affection borne by their lamented Frederic to his friend cemented still more strongly those ties which bound him to the bereaved; while the younger branches of the family, with hearts though truly sorrowing, yet naturally less deeply impressed than those of their parents, received him at once with unalloyed pleasure, and soon learned to consider him as a substitute for the brother they had lost.

For much of this, Fortescue was unquestionably indebted to his own kind, conciliating, and affectionate disposition, —for some of it, perhaps, to the evident attachment which displayed itself in a thousand forms between him and his early companion and avowed favourite, Matilda, now a fine full-grown girl, rich in health, beauty, and accomplishments. Lord Manningham did not long remain blind to an attachment which was so unequivocally displayed on both sides, nor did he regard it with a disapproving eye.

Of the head and heart of Fortescue, as I have before

said, he entertained the highest opinion; and although the accounts from college, which originally induced him to favour his entrance into the army, had represented his young friend as likely to become a sufferer from an overheated imagination, yet the very same report spoke in the most gratifying terms of the correctness of his moral conduct, the respectability of his talents, and the amiableness of his disposition.

In his subsequent commerce with that epitome of the world which is found in a marching regiment, his general deportment had, as we have seen, been ever regulated according to the nicest rules of the gentleman and the soldier; and if he had not, as yet, distinguished himself in the field, or in the more active duties of the profession he had adopted, it was manifest from his sentiments and gallant bearing that this was only owing to his not having as yet been called into his proper sphere of action, nor would any one who knew him have hesitated to assert that time and opportunity alone "were wanting to his fame."

This opportunity was not long deferred: a partial irruption of the disaffected tribes took place, prematurely indeed for their success; but certain precautionary movements on the part of the government had apprised them that their intentions were more than suspected, and, wily as they were, an immediate outbreak seemed now preferable to the more doubtful advantages which under other circumstances might have been obtained by a longer delay.

In the course of the desultory but sanguinary struggle which ensued, Fortescue did not belie the opinion formed of him by his fellow-soldiers; active, vigilant, patient, and intrepid, he displayed in this his first campaign an almost intuitive knowledge of tactics—a coolness and an energy which ranked him with the veteran; nor, in the fierce and final conflict which eventually broke the power of the enemy, and forced him to sue for peace from the depths of his native jungles, were his valour and conduct less conspicuous.

A wound, inflicted on his sword-arm by the sabre of a

subaddah, who fell in the act, was just of sufficient consequence to call forth all the cares and attentions, without exciting the alarms, of those who loved him. Need it be said, that those of Matilda were the foremost—that her hand was ever ready to adjust the bandage, her arm the one most eagerly tendered and accepted as a support?

It was during the temporary secession from his duties, occasioned by this accident, that the hearts, the sentiments, the very thoughts of the lovers became more thoroughly unveiled to each other. Reminiscences of "auld langsyne," the occurrences of the days that were gone, formed, as may well be imagined, no unfrequent topics of discourse between two sensitive beings, once so closely connected, then so long separated, and now again so happily united—the freaks, the studies, the pastimes of their early years were a never-failing theme on which to expatiate—nor was Edith, with her legendary treasures, forgotten. The frequent allusions to her fanciful creed made by Matilda, on whose young and somewhat romantic mind her marvellous tales had produced a deeper impression than she was herself aware of, once more aroused in the bosom of her auditor thoughts and feelings which, although the busy life he had of late led had rendered them dormant, were anything but extinguished.

The visionary and the enthusiast becomes not less so under the influence of love; the nature of his reveries may be changed by passion—they may vacillate between gloom and ecstasy; but their power over the imagination is even increased, and, if partaken by the object of his affection, may be urged by sympathy to the very height of excitement.

By degrees Matilda became the *confidante* of all the day-dreams which had floated through the mind of Eustace.

To one of her tender and affectionate turn there was a something so congenial and endearing in the theory of a communion of spirits, freed from the grosser and embarrassing clog of matter—in the idea that, although bodies might be divided, nought could interfere to prevent the union of souls—that it is scarcely to be wondered at if,

listening with eagerness to the object of her young affections, she soon learned to imbibe the most extravagant of his notions, and to believe, because she wished, them real.

Screened from the intolerable heat of a vertical sun by the intercepting verandah, or courting the coolness of the evening breeze beneath their favourite tree, minutes, nay, hours would fly by unheeded, and leave the pair, as they found them, occupied like our first parents, so beautifully described by the poet, in the discussion of mysteries too recondite and abstruse for human intellect to penetrate.

> "He, with his consorted Eve,
> The story heard attentive, and was fill'd
> With admiration and deep muse, to hear
> Of things so high and strange!"

The attachment of the disembodied spirit after death to those it loved, ere it "had shuffled off its mortal coil," —its presence, and capabilities of watching over their welfare, and holding a communion with them at once intimate and mysterious, was a favourite contemplation of Fortescue, and one of his most cherished ideas. He exulted in a persuasion which seemed to place his love beyond the reach of accident, and to render it indissoluble even by death itself.

It were difficult, perhaps impossible, accurately to trace this feeling to its source, or follow it, through every connecting link of the chain, to its termination in full conviction. Those cooler heads who have threaded the labyrinths of the absurd and incongruous, yet sometimes sublime speculations of the philosophical visionary whose lucubrations had bewildered him—they, and they alone, will easily conceive how powerful the spell must be upon a kindred mind on which they have once succeeded in making an impression.

It is an inseparable property of Fanaticism to be ever in extremes, and Love, even when it has to do with stronger minds than that of the gentle and confiding Matilda Stafford, is but too ready to see with the eyes, and hear with the ears, of the one object which is every-

thing to it, and to which it is everything. Perhaps, too, some sad presentiment,—as the glance of her lover would fondly rest upon the elegant but fragile form before him,—might half induce a nameless dread lest that form might be *too* fragile—too nearly allied to another world to promise a long continuance in this; while, on the other side, the recollection of her brother,—so lately rejoicing in youth, and health, and spirits,—now flourishing in all the lusty prime of manhood, and then at once stricken to the earth—a withered, blighted thing!—might have its full share in fostering the predispositions of Matilda, and in causing her to cling more tenaciously to a belief, pregnant, as she would imagine, with security—to views, the realization of which would prove a safeguard against separation, and assuage, if not absolutely vanquish, the terrors and regrets attendant upon that hour when all that gives motion to the active, or elevation to the eminent—all that sparkles in the eye of earthly hope, or pants in the bosom of earthly affection, at once becomes dust in the balance, without weight and without regard.

Meanwhile, their union, contemplated as it was with approbation by both the parents of Miss Stafford, met with repeated checks and obstructions, not more annoying in themselves to the lovers by the delay which they occasioned to their happiness, than lamentable from the circumstances which produced them. These were the events already alluded to in the early part of these memoirs.

For several years might Lord Manningham's house indeed be called "The House of Mourning." The pernicious effects of the climate upon European constitutions became but too sadly manifested. One by one his children sickened, faded, and were no more. No less than five of them were borne in succession to the tomb, and that at intervals so brief, that hardly had one been deposited in the "place appointed unto all living," ere another exhibited tokens, but too fatally verified by the event, that its doors would soon again be opened to receive a kindred victim.

It is not to be concluded that, during the whole of this season of affliction, Fortescue was constantly present at

head-quarters: his military duties, on the contrary, and the confidence reposed in him by his chief, had repeatedly occasioned a temporary absence, and drawn him on various occasions up the country.

These absences, however, if they could not increase, certainly had no tendency to weaken his affection or his sympathy. A correspondence of the most tender kind was kept up, when practicable, between him and his fair mistress; and when distance or other circumstances were unfavourable to the transmission of those gentle missives which

"Waft a sigh from Indus to the pole,"

the lover's old alternative and *confidante*, the moon, interposed her good offices as no inefficient substitute. To gaze, at an appointed hour, upon her disk—to cherish the thought that the beloved one, though afar, was at the same instant engaged in a similar contemplation—was the resource, and speeded that soft intercourse of spirit they flattered and had almost succeeded in persuading themselves that they had established, despite the obstacles interposed by corporeal trammels.

During one of these expeditions Eustace had been taken seriously ill: his youth, however, and a good constitution had triumphed, after a short but severe struggle, and released him, for the present at least, from the performance of his share of a voluntary and mutual obligation, entered into at this period of their attachment, which pledged the one first departing to the "land of souls" to manifest him or herself visibly to the survivor, if so it might be; and thus to evidence that death itself had failed to rend the ties which bound them to each other.

His return, weak and enfeebled as he was, to the Government House was, I need scarcely say, an event hailed with joy by all parties, but especially by Matilda, to whom he failed not to impart all that he had suffered, both in mind and body, as well as the consolation that had been afforded him in moments which he had then believed to be his last, by the thought that, though

expiring far from her and all he loved, his enfranchised spirit might yet be permitted to return, to hover over and to prove her guardian and protecting angel.

The tears of Matilda, as she hung in fondness on his arm, flowed freely, the rather, perhaps, as she anticipated but too truly another separation at no distant period.

Hordes of those restless and predatory tribes, whom the courage and conduct of the lord governor had once before so effectually repressed, were again in arms. The most formidable accounts of their numbers, and of the ravages they were committing, arrived daily at the Residence. All attempts at negotiation (and such indeed were resorted to, rather that the appeal to arms might be plainly the result of necessity, not choice, on the part of the British Government) entirely failed, and the veteran Manningham once again prepared to take the field.

Fortescue, by this time appointed to a majority, was of course destined to take a prominent part in the expedition. His mind, perhaps yet acted upon by the memory of his recent escape, was filled with gloomy forebodings: something of this he could not succeed in concealing during his parting interview with Matilda, which was in consequence a more than usually tender one; and a solemn renewal of the contract already mentioned was made at his express and earnest entreaty. The fond girl caught the infection of alarm from him; and heavily indeed did anxiety preponderate over hope in her bosom when the hour of separation at length arrived, and she saw her Eustace riding at the head of his column, and bound for the almost impervious forests and terrific *ghauts* of Nipal.

It is by no means my intention to follow him through his campaign, nor to relate "the moving accidents by flood and field" which he was destined to encounter and surmount. The events of the Pindarree war belong to history. It is sufficient for my purpose to state that, on its successful termination, Eustace, as if to belie his presentiment, returned, with unimpaired health and an increased reputation, to lay his newly-gathered laurels at the feet of his beloved. He found her as beautiful, as

fond as ever ; nor did his entreaties, that now at length his long and tried attachment might meet its dearest reward, experience any farther repulse, either on her part or on that of her parents.

Lord Manningham, indeed, in whose favour Fortescue had, if possible, continued to rise, did not affect to conceal his pleasure in consenting to the immediate union of the lovers ; and the nuptial-day was fixed. The very evening before the morn that was to crown his fondest hopes had arrived ; and Fortescue, after several hours passed in the society of her who was so soon to be indissolubly united to him, had returned, for the last time, to his quarters, it having been arranged that, for the present at least, the young couple should take up their residence in the Government House.

The expectant bridegroom had retired for the night, and was in the act of throwing himself upon his couch, to obtain—if anticipated happiness would allow it him—a short repose, when, as he ever after averred, a single shriek—shrill and piercing as horror and agony could utter—rang in his ear.

He sprang in disorder from the bed : he could not be mistaken—the tones of that voice were too firmly fixed in his memory not to be recognized, even though strained to an unnatural pitch by pain or affright. It was Matilda's cry he heard ; and, as the conviction struck upon his heart, the sound of his own name, uttered as with difficulty, seemed, to his startled fancy, to float upon the night-breeze.

It was an appeal for succour—for protection ; and with a bosom throbbing with anxious and undefined apprehension of he knew not what, a few seconds saw him retracing his steps to the Residence, with all the speed which the utmost energies of his agile frame could command.

Swift is the pace of him who thinks the beloved of his heart in danger, and few were the minutes which sufficed to transport Fortescue again to the habitation which enshrined her ; yet, ere he reached the portal, a sound of hurry and confusion from the house, and lights seen rapidly traversing the interior, increased his forebodings

to almost the certainty of misfortune: nor were his anticipations deceived.

Forcing his way through the alarmed domestics, in whose countenances grief and consternation were too plainly visible, Eustace rushed towards the apartments of Matilda. They were already occupied by a group, the expression of whose countenances would have defied the efforts of the painter.

On one side lay Lady Manningham, pale and senseless, in the arms of two of her female attendants;—at the foot of the bed stood her husband, apparently unconscious of her situation, and with every faculty absorbed in contemplating his darling daughter, on whose pallid features Death had already set his seal. The household physician, and another medical officer attached to the forces, were vainly employed in endeavouring to restore animation to the pale frame before them, while their countenances sufficiently demonstrated the hopelessness of the attempt.

Not far from the couch of death, and gazed at with undisguised horror by the attendants, as they hurried to and fro, lay an object which too fatally explained the scene,—one of the most venomous of the serpent tribe that curse the arid shores of Hindostan,—one whose poison is scarcely more deadly than instantaneous in its effects.

A single glance at the crushed reptile, and the sight of his unfortunate mistress, revealed the whole maddening truth to the miserable Fortescue.

He threw himself in unrestrained agony by the side of her whom he had so lately left high in hope and glowing with affection,—of her whose parting spirit had, as he verily believed, called on him for aid in those more than mortal accents which yet vibrated on his ear.

The shock was, under all the circumstances, too severe for human endurance; and, after a burst of irrepressible agony, he was borne from the apartment, insensible alike to the misery of those around him and to his own.

CHAPTER XX.

Come, let us dance and sing,
While all Barbadoes' bells shall ring ;
Love strikes the fiddle-string,
And Venus plays the lute !
Hymen gay
Struts away,
Happy at the wedding-day ;
Cocks his chin,
And figures in,
To tabor, fife, and flute !

COLMAN.

MORE OF "DEATH'S DOINGS."—FOR ENGLAND HO !—BILLS.—ORDERED TO LIE ON THE TABLE.—A RACE.—A CHASE.—A "LARK."—A TORY OUTRAGE, AND A LIBERAL ACCOUNT OF IT.—WEDDING FESTIVITIES.—WHERE'S THE PARSON ?

It were needless to dwell on the melancholy blank in Fortescue's existence which succeeded the annihilation of his fondest hopes, nor shall I detain my readers by expatiating on the feelings of Lord and Lady Manningham on so overwhelming a calamity. It is my Cousin Nicholas, whose "whereabouts" I have charged myself with the task of recording ; nor dare I suffer any minor consideration to interfere longer with the concerns of that interesting individual. Indeed, but that the impression produced on Fortescue by the incidents already related eventually exercised a material influence on his fortunes, as well as on my own, I should scarcely have ventured on so formidable a digression from the highway of my history.

It will only be necessary, therefore, to state that the bereaved mother never recovered the shock inflicted on her. Her enfeebled frame sank wholly beneath the repetition of blows which had long since prostrated its best energies ; and, after a few short months of hopeless lingering, she followed her beloved children gently and unrepiningly to the tomb, bequeathing the young Amelia

to the concentrated affection of him who was now her only parent.

In this affection towards the blooming girl Fortescue soon became a sharer; and often, as he turned from gazing on her animated features, his upraised eye and quivering lip would seem to intimate that he was even then holding high and mysterious converse with some unseen being, of which the fairy form beside him was the subject.

Certain it is that from this period the fondness of Lord Manningham himself for this "sole daughter of his house and heart" could hardly be said to exceed his own; nor could a father watch more tenderly over the welfare of the most beloved child. Every word and action announced that Fortescue considered himself bound by some sacred obligation to be her guardian and protector against every mischance; and as she advanced towards womanhood, this self-imposed task was only the more strongly manifested. From the broken expressions and half-uttered sentences which occasionally escaped him, a doubt would, it is true, sometimes arise in the minds of those who witnessed them, whether the task were indeed self-imposed; and more than one of the female part of the establishment especially had listened awe-struck to the insinuations of the wonder-loving valet, Mr. Pipeclay, as he more than hinted that, at the dead hour of night, he had often heard "his master the major argufying with a ghost about miss."

That he entertained towards her the warmest affection none could doubt; as little could the nature of that affection be questioned. Love, at least the paisson usually known by that name, in him was manifestly dead.—No—his was the fervent but pure and hallowed attachment of an elder brother. Her father saw and hailed its progress with the greatest satisfaction, without being for one moment blind to its quality or origin; and, when affairs of importance connected with his official duties induced him to cause Eustace to precede him to Europe, nothing gave him greter satisfaction than the conviction which their parting hour afforded, that, happen

what might to himself, his daughter would still possess an affectionate and disinterested protector.

On Lord Manningham's return to England with Amelia, Fortescue was in the north, having been induced to accompany a brother officer into Cumberland; nor did the friends again encounter each other till the moment when Eustace had the happiness of placing in his noble patron's arms the daughter whom he had so opportunely rescued from the particularly impudent abduction of my Cousin Nicholas.

I have said, that of this "tenth transmitter" of the Bullwinkle physiognomy no recent accounts had been received. That he was yet *in rerum naturâ*, however, was to be inferred from certain interesting *memoranda*, which occasionally reached Sir Oliver in the shape of sundry paper parallelograms, adorned with goodly columns of arithmetical ciphers, and surmounted by "the Roman initials of pounds, shillings, and pence."

To all these applications, and they came "thick as leaves in Valambrosa," did Sir Oliver put in a demurrer. "Nick had a handsome allowance, and if he exceeded it, he might take the consequences."

Many of the items, too, excited the good baronet's surprise, no less than his indignation. Of the effeminacy of the race of dandies he had heard something: but that they should have arrived at the Sybaritism of wearing "satin shoes," and "pearl ear-rings," astounded, while it disgusted him; yet many of the invoices of goods sold and delivered, which had been sent in on account of "N. Bullwinkle, Esq.," comprised articles of a similar description; while long bills for "lace" seemed to intimate that, in the revolutions of fashion, the Mechlin cravats and ruffles of the first Georges were again become the prevailing mode.

"A Chinchilli muff, with boa to match," was absolutely abominable. Sir Oliver had, indeed, seen something like the latter encompassing the throat of a guardsman off duty, during his late sojourn in the metropolis;—some of the household troops, too, had, as he remembered, borne an article not unlike the former on their heads at the

last review; but, then, "Nick was not in the Blues, and why the d—l should he want to stick his head in a muff?"—He could have no pretensions to a uniform, while every notion of propriety was outraged by the supposition, that any man would introduce such an innovation into his ordinary costume.

But it mattered little;—"if Nick chose to make a jackass and a monkey of himself, he might," but not one penny would he, Sir Oliver, contribute towards such a degradation of the natural dignity of man. A large proportion of the bills were, in consequence, returned, with an intimation to the above effect, anything but agreeable to his numerous correspondents.

As Sir Oliver made no secret of these protocols, or of the extent of Mr. Bullwinkle's pecuniary engagements, some of which were of considerable standing, a new light broke in upon me. That a gentleman, whose *menus plaisirs* required such ample supplies, should find four hundred a year, paid quarterly, insufficient for his occasions was to be expected; and although experience had taught me that he would readily borrow of any friend who would lend to him, yet such resources were clearly too limited, and too precarious, to form a very material item in his budget for the current year. The mystery of Mr. Arbuthnot, then, and his Hebrew correspondent, seemed to receive a ready solution. Again did I task my memory to recall everything that had passed on that very unsatisfactory morning, when our united researches after my fair *incognita* had terminated in nothing but fatigue and disappointment. That Nicholas must have seized some opportunity, on that very day, to purloin my letter, I had before felt satisfied; and now entertained little doubt that he had availed himself of the moment when I was discharging our bill at the coffee-house, to put in practice one of those clever pieces of *legerdemain* on which he piqued himself.

That the Jew money-lender's letter was then substituted by him for my mother's I became convinced, as well as that the needy gentleman, on whose attempt to raise cash by "de post obit" it put so decided a negative,

was either Nicholas himself, or some accommodating associate of his in the noble art and mystery of "kite-flying."

In the absence of all positive information on the subject of his present place of sojourn—for the address at Frump Paddock I looked upon as clearly apocryphal—one circumstance still induced me to believe that he was, in fact, at no great distance from the alleged locality of that retreat of all the domestic virtues.

A morning paper of high Tory principles had copied from the *Sussex Conservative* a formidable paragraph, to which, by way of "gracing its tale with decent horror," it had prefixed the words, "Atrocious outrage, and horrible violation of the sanctuaries of the dead."

The account which followed was dated from Brighton, and stated, in substance, that in the dusk of the preceding evening, a truculent-looking ruffian had been detected in the very act of carrying on his disgusting trade of a resurrectionist, in the very churchyard of that marine metropolis :—that being hotly pursued, he had excited the greatest alarm and consternation among the elegant promenaders of the Steyne, by running the whole length of that fashionable lounge, with the dead body of a child under his arm, the bare sight of whose projecting legs had, *inter alia maxime deflenda*, frightened the Honourable Mrs. Faddle into fits, and would, it was to be feared, from her "interesting situation," effect a change in the succession to the earldom of Fiddlefumkin. It was gratifying, however, "to be able to assure their readers" that "the monster" was eventually secured by the "intrepidity of Mrs. Martha Gun," and conveyed, with the *corpus delicti* upon him, to the nearest justice of the peace. On his examination before the magistrate, he was fully identified as a distinguished Radical reformer, and a leading member of Lodge No. 275 of the Grand National Consolidated Trades' Union.

The "article" concluded with an animated apostrophe on the increasing depravity and licentiousness of the lower orders.

A "Liberal" journal, of the same date, gave a different version of the same story, extracted from the *Brighthelm-*

stone Independent, and headed in what are technically called "small caps"—THE TORIES AGAIN!!—INFAMOUS ATTACK ON THE RIGHTS OF THE PUBLIC!!!

One of "those hereditary nuisances," who so arrogantly "tyrannize over the people," had, according to this *liberal* statement, committed a daring and felonious robbery upon an eminent dealer in all kinds of spirituous liquors.

This "*Gentleman*, for so he called himself, and boasted that he belonged to a noble (!!) family," in his sheer, wanton, "aristocratical love of oppressing the useful classes," had snatched up, and run away with, a bran new Jolly Bacchus, just come home from the painter's, and about to be placed astride upon a barrel over the door of Mr. Juniper's *emporium*.

The "world was challenged" to "ransack the annals" of Nero and Nadir Schah for a parallel to the "heartless and insolent barbarity" of thus wresting from an "honest operative" the emblem of his calling, and "opposing the march of intellect," by depriving "the people" of "a guide to useful knowledge," which taught them where to apply for consolation "under the miseries inflicted on them by peers and parsons."

"Dukes and princes, as they styled themselves," were, it was added, *always* committing "outrages on the people," by their "larks;" and "it was notorious," that, when the "h—l-born minister, Pitt," was in office, a lantern had been tied to an old woman's tail in Pall Mall by the hands of royalty itself;—but "the people" would "no longer be trampled upon," "the time was come," &c. &c. &c.

It was "much to be lamented" that "several operatives," occupied at the moment in partaking of certain choice compounds, had suffered severely from the breaking of a large case-bottle of oil of vitriol, which *happened* to be in the shop, and was overturned in the first rush after the fugitive, who, bolting across the Steyne, with his prize under his arm, would doubtless have escaped with it altogether, had he not by the greatest good fortune run against a lady who was crying mackerel, knocked her down, and rolled over her into the channel.

The examination, it was added, was strictly private,

and the delinquent had "received permission to speak to the prosecutor;" but the editor "had authority to state," that all attempts at compromise *would have been* indignantly rejected by the truly patriotic Mr. Juniper, but that he was induced to relinquish farther proceedings by the reflection that, as the painter's bill had not been paid, he could not conscientiously swear the image of the son of Semele to be his own property; the culprit, therefore, was of course "discharged with an admonition."

"We should ill perform our duty to the public," said the *Brighthelmstone Independent*, "were we to refrain from publishing the name of the delinquent; and this we should undoubtedly do, had it not unluckily escaped our reporter's memory; we have reason, however, to believe, that he was identified as the heir to a baronetcy."

The whole was wound up *en règle* by an elaborate *eulogium* on the virtues of "producers," and an *exposé* of the practical inconvenience of having such things as a House of Peers and a Bench of Bishops, without whose corrupt influence none of these "larks" would be entered into.

That Nicholas was the hero of this absurd adventure I considered very far from improbable.

From boyhood he had been a great collector of emblematic rarities;—wooden hats, golden boots, the lion gules of the publican, and the azure globe of the pawnbroker,—the solitary barber's pole that graced the village of Underdown, and every commercial device that the neighbouring town could supply, had early constituted the most cherished ornaments of his private apartment.

In this his *museum*, the Highlander of the tobacconist extended his mull courteously towards the black doll of the dealer in marine stores, and the gigantic spectacles of the optician seemed to gaze undismayed at the goldbeater's uplifted mallet. Knockers, scrapers, shutter-pens, and pump-handles, lay scattered around in elegant and unstudied variety.

Nor were the finer arts neglected; a portrait of Admiral Lord Rodney, done in oil, and in excellent preservation, needed not its subjoined legend of "Good entertainment

for man and horse," to prove that Nicholas's taste in painting had withdrawn it from a more elevated situation; while a Galen's head,—umquhile the property of "Pig-tail Drench," and gorgeous as gold-leaf could make it,—evinced that he was equally alive to the charms of sculpture.

That to these treasures of the moderns he should wish to add some specimens of a more ancient school, was to be expected from one of my cousin's classical mind. The convivial deity of heathen mythology would harmonize admirably with a magnificent bunch of golden grapes which already depended temptingly from his ceiling, and of all "the gods of the Greeks" *Lyæus* was the one for whom he professed and felt the greatest veneration. Hence, as I was persuaded, the attack upon the unpaid-for property of the conscientious Joseph Juniper; and I looked forward with confidence to the time when, "flushed with a purple grace," the jolly god would yet "show his honest face" in one of the back attics of Underdown Hall.

Meanwhile my own affairs went on smoothly and happily as heart could wish. My health was now perfectly re-established, and no obstacle existed to the completion of my wishes save what might arise from the "law's delay" in the due preparation of settlements, with all those provisoes respecting pin-money and alimony, which, in what is termed high life, usually accompany matrimony, and which, in the joining two persons together for life, contemplate the extreme probability of their separating for ever.

Lord Manningham affected no unnecessary secrecy on this occasion, nor was Uncle Oliver the man to hide his candle under a bushel:—various paragraphs, therefore, soon found their way into different journals from the tradespeople employed on the wedding *paraphernalia*. The *trousseau* of the bride, the equipage of the bridegroom, "the names of the horses and colours of the riders," were duly announced with all the pomp and circumstance usual on these occasions, and with a minuteness of detail as laudably accurate as that which had heretofore blazoned forth the Ollapod livery "tastefully turned up with a rhubarb-coloured lapelle."

At length, after a proper proportion of these pilot-balloons had sufficiently informed the expectant public which way the wind was blowing, the *Morning Post* put forth the following clincher.

"H. M. S. the *Superb*, 74, Hon. Captain Loblolly, has been ordered round to ——, where she will take on board the Right Reverend the new Bishop of Bengal. His lordship was consecrated on Sunday, the 4th instant, in the chapel appertaining to the Archiepiscopal Palace at Lambeth, and is about to embark forthwith, with his amiable family, for the important diocese over which he has been called upon to preside.

"On his way to the coast, his lordship will visit Underdown Hall, the seat of Sir Oliver Bullwinkle, Bart., for the express purpose of solemnizing the marriage ceremony between Charles Stafford, Esq., nephew to the hospitable proprietor of the mansion, and his cousin, the Hon. Amelia Stafford, the beautiful and accomplished heiress of Lord Viscount Manningham, K.B., late Governor-General, &c. &c. &c.

"Immediately after the ceremony, the Right Reverend Prelate will proceed to the place of embarkation, while the happy couple will set out for Belvoir Abbey, on the banks of the Wye, the splendid domain recently purchased by the noble nabob, from the heirs of the late Lord Cumberville."

Three days subsequently, a Sunday paper, piquing itself, and justly, on the priority of its intelligence, and the accuracy of its details, had a paragraph differing slightly from the former.

"The new Bishop of Bengal is, we are credibly informed, about to proceed to his diocese in the West Indies, where his lordship has long been most anxiously expected, though we have good reason to believe that few persons till lately have been aware of his appointment.

"His lordship will embark in the *Skeleton* hired transport, Captain Coffin commander;—and here we cannot

help calling the attention of the public to the disgraceful parsimony of Ministers in not placing a government vessel at the Right Reverend Prelate's disposal ;—though, as profuse expenditure can never be justified, they are quite right after all in refusing to add to the burthens of the country for the convenience of a bloated hierarchy—unless indeed there should be good reason for the contrary,—which we are inclined to think may possibly be the case.

" His lordship has been for some time on a visit at Bullwinkle Place, the residence of Oliver Underdown, Esq., whose elegant and accomplished daughter is about to bestow her hand and immense fortune, including the fine estate of Thingumbob Hall, bequeathed to her by her uncle the late Lord Thingumdiddle,—upon Viscount Manningham. Gunter has exhausted all his taste in the composition of the bridecake, which the bishop probably took down with him in his carriage ;—unless, indeed,—as we have been assured is the case,—his lordship on this occasion travelled down on horseback, followed by a single groom."

The former announcement of the two, if less particular, was in substance the most correct. The bishop was an old and valued friend of Lord Manningham, whose interest indeed had mainly contributed to his appointment ; and as the state of my mother's health presented an impediment to her sanctioning our union with her presence in the metropolis, it had been determined that the ceremony should take place in the parish church of Underdown, the good prelate consenting, not without some personal inconvenience to himself, to deviate a few miles from his direct route to the coast, for the satisfaction of bestowing the nuptial benediction upon his patron's daughter.

The 10th of the month was the anniversary of my mother's birth, and this day, which had been fixed upon, at her request, to unite Amelia and myself, despite Time's ambling progress, at length arrived.

The sun rose fair and brilliant ; and if all nature did not absolutely " wear one universal grin" on the occasion, neither had we to accuse her of being a niggard of her smiles.

Sir Oliver was early in the field, ordering, superintending, and confusing everything and everybody. Miss Pyefinch was not idle; a handsome *déjeûner à la fourchette* was spread under her delegated auspices, and loaded the long table in the Cedar parlour, flanking which, stood her brother in full uniform;—a suit of regimentals that had long since fallen into desuetude, and which, from their cut, might have belonged to my Lord Ligonier, having been drawn forth from the very inmost recesses of the gallant officer's wardrobe for the purpose of doing honour to the day.

Four fine blood horses, with a white favour at each ear, were champing their bits in the stable, impatient of delay, and eager for the moment when they should have the honour of whirling the bride and bridegroom over hill and dale;—the "handsome travelling barouche," so glowingly described in Messrs. Honeyman's advertising paragraphs for the last fortnight, stood ready loaded, with imperial fixed, and all the baggage, save the lady's maid and her bandboxes, properly adjusted. "The church was decked at morning tide;" the sconces were well supplied with miniature *bouquets*, and the pews with expectant rustics, all curious to witness the "grand wedding." Within the belfry sat eight or ten "college youths," whose "united ages" amounted to heaven knows how many centuries, all eager to ring out heaven knows how many "triple-bob-majors;" while in front of the old ivied porch were ranged in two goodly rows, a pleasing sample of the village Ophelias, each with her basket of moral-bearing flowerets, blushing, giggling, and wondering "what could possibly make the gentlefolks so late;" everybody in short was in a bustle, for everything had long been ready, but—an awful *but* on such an emergency—the clergyman!

It is recorded of an eminent practitioner of the art of abstraction, that when on his way to that fatal tree, where, as Mat Prior tells us,

> "The Squire of the Pad and the Knight of the Post
> Find their pains no more baulk'd, and their aims no more cross'd,"

he addressed the crowd, which was running up Holborn Hill beside him, with all that *politesse* which distinguished the golden age of thievery, an age when the coarse expression that so disgusted Juan,

"D—n your eyes, your money or your life!"

never disgraced the lips of a highwayman of any mark or likelihood; and when the Macleans and Duvals, whose loss posterity has so much reason to lament, would rather have left a man's brains unscattered, than have blown them out in a rude and indelicate manner—"Gentlemen," said the professor alluded to, "pray do not hurry,—you will heat yourselves, and that most unnecessarily; on my honour, *there will be no fun till I come!*" Alack, that the good Bishop of Bengal did not despatch some monitory messenger fraught with a similar hint! What hurryings and scamperings, what wonderings and toilings, and turmoilings, would not such a trifling attention on his part have prevented! So at least thought Sir Oliver.

As the special license with which I was duly armed, did away with the necessity of attending to hours strictly canonical, one o'clock had been the time fixed upon for the ceremony, our Right Reverend friend having promised to be with us before noon. But

"The bell of the castle toll'd One,"

and the wheels of his chariot still tarried; the groom stationed, by way of outpost, at the head of the avenue, to telegraph his lordship's appearance in the offing, still gazed and "made no sign;"—jellies and cold chicken stood untasted; Sir Oliver began to look fidgety, and the captain voracious; the eyes of the former oscillating between his watch and the window, those of the latter between a pyramid of prawns and a lobster salad.

The great clock that had for years enlivened the Hall with its tickings, now distinctly sounded Two!—The vibration served to unlock the lips of Miss Pyefinch, who, breaking the taciturnity which seemed to have hermetically sealed those of all the rest of the party assembled,

gave vent in a whisper to a remark which, though neither very profound nor very original, was unquestionably both true and appropriate ;—she said, " It was very odd !"

Sir Oliver gasped, and the captain helped himself to a glass of Madeira, but neither replied ; their looks, however, were so encouraging, that the lady ventured to follow up her observation with a hope that " nothing was the matter !"

The charm was now dissolved ; every tongue recovered its functions, and it was unanimously resolved, in contradiction to her so kindly expressed wish, that " something *was*—that something *must be* the matter," and away dashed the baronet, watch in hand, on a solitary visit to his sentinel, who still remained in warder guise, looking " as far as he could see."

The muttered ejaculation that escaped my uncle as he sallied forth, satisfied me that the wish then uppermost in his mind was connected with the speedy translation of our Right Reverend friend to a diocese even more sultry and extensive than the one just subjected to his pastoral superintendence. I doubt whether at the moment I should myself have interposed a *veto* to the *congé d'élire*.

Our wedding party seemed now much in the same situation with that which the bard records to have been so unseasonably marred by a certain " Jock of Hazeldean," save that, fortunately for myself, the only personage missing was the bishop, and not the bride, who still remained closeted above stairs with my mother, and, of course, in a state of suspense rendered anything but enviable by this flagrant instance of episcopal remissness.

Lord Manningham himself had now become uneasy, and as another hour was by this time fast drawing to a close without any sign of the prelate's appearance, a serious inquiry ensued as to " What was to be done ?"

The viscount, expressing his fears that his Right Reverend friend had met with some accident, hinted at the necessity of a postponement of the ceremony. Against this measure, however, I entered my most vehement protest, suggesting, by way of *contre-projet*, that, as the parson of the parish could tie the nuptial knot quite as firmly, if

not quite so handsomely, as his ecclesiastical superior, the services of our old acquaintance the Reverend Mr. Bustle should be put in requisition.

That learned and much esteemed gentleman was, of course, in attendance as an invited guest, and now readily proffered his assistance towards rescuing us from our dilemma, the prospect of officiating, indeed, seeming almost to console him for missing an introduction to so dignified a pillar of the Church.

The discussion waxed warm, and Miss Pyefinch was preparing to issue forth and summon Sir Oliver to "the talk," when a glance from the window showed us that personage returning to the house, and in company with a domestic in a sad-coloured livery, who led by the bridle-rein a hot and jaded steed, from which he seemed but just to have dismounted.

"News at last from the bishop!" quoth Lord Manningham. The captain nodded. "Of course, then, we must not now expect him in person!" The captain shook his head, and helped himself to another bumper of Madeira.

When Sir Oliver entered the room, he bore an epistle in each hand; the one was open, the seal of the other had not been broken. I saw at a glance that my good uncle was in one of his old fits of mystified excitement.

"Why, what is the meaning of all this, Lord Manningham? Is your confounded bishop drunk or mad?"

"Neither, I will venture to affirm," responded Lord Manningham, gravely.

"Then, who the devil's Pumppe?" asked the baronet.

"I know no such person," replied the viscount.

"Why, zounds! he's your very particular friend," shrieked Sir Oliver.

"I never heard the name before," said his lordship.

"Then read your own letter, my lord, and see if it will throw any light upon the cursed rigmarole stuff I have got here; as I am a living soul I can't make head or tail of a single word of it."

The exhausted baronet threw himself into a chair, puffing like a stranded grampus, while the peer quietly

received from his extended hand the proffered billet, which he unsealed, and retreated to the window to peruse; meanwhile, I gently drew its fellow from my uncle's grasp, and, sanctioned by his mute permission, read it thus:—

"Sir Oliver,—Though personally unacquainted with you, I beg to express to every member of your family my sincere sympathy on an event so distressing to their feelings. Strong as his mind is, I tremble to think on the effect which the shock must have produced on poor Lord Manningham, though the fears of his friend, Sir Willoughby Pumppe, have, I trust, exaggerated an evil in itself sufficiently formidable.

"I would fain hope that the object of the infatuated girl's choice is not so utterly depraved as he has been led to believe. When his lordship returns, pray take a proper opportunity to present the inclosed. You will agree with me, that, under the circumstances, my presence at Underdown Hall would be not only useless, but distressing to all concerned; I proceed, therefore, at once to the vessel in waiting for me.

"As the wind is now fair, I dare scarcely hope for any further intelligence before we sail, but I shall expect it with anxiety by the very first means of communication.

"To the kind attentions of Sir Willoughby Pumppe and yourself, I commit my excellent friend with confidence, regretting that I am precluded from offering him my personal condolements; and earnestly praying that he may be strengthened to support this heavy calamity.—Yours very faithfully, "Geo. Bengal."

No great degree of light, it must be confessed, was thrown upon the cause of his lordship's absence by this mysterious missive, which might, in verity, have puzzled much wiser heads than that of Sir Oliver, and went far towards realizing the sarcastic simile of the satirist: "As obscure as an explanatory note."

From a review of the context in Lord Manningham's hands, however, better things were to be hoped; and

although, after all attempts at elucidation, much remained to be guessed at, sufficient *data* were obtained from that quarter to satisfy every one that the bishop had been victimized by some impudent impostor.

I shall not pretend to give the letter in detail, and for this piece of forbearance I claim the especial thanks of all who hate, as much as I do, closely written epistles of three sides and a postscript, particularly as, after all, it left a great deal to be inferred. Thus much was, however, perfectly clear from its contents.

A gentleman, or one whose outward man bespoke him such, had called at the bishop's temporary abode in London, late on the day preceding that of his intended departure: he had announced himself as "Sir Willoughby Pumppe," and, after apologizing, in apparent agitation, for his intrusion at so unseemly an hour, had apprised his lordship that the whole family of his "dear friend and relative Lord Manningham" had just been thrown into the greatest confusion and distress by the sudden elopement of the Hon. Miss Stafford with a *soi-disant* Polish count, a low fiddler, of the name of Wiskerewski, with whom she had unfortunately contracted an acquaintance soon after her arrival in this country.

By the aid of white teeth, black mustaches, paste shirt-buttons, a profusion of rings and chains that would have put an alderman to open shame, this person had succeeded, said "Sir Willoughby," in palming himself upon society as a nobleman expatriated for political offences, a sworn foe to autocrats, and a "martyr to the sacred cause of liberty."

The young lady, who was deeply read in the history of Thaddeus of Warsaw, wanted but a *chansonette* or two sung in a corner *sotto voce* to the guitar,—an accomplishment, by the way, in which his countship beat Miss Porter's hero "all to sticks,"—to surrender at discretion; and these were plentifully supplied. With a degree of finesse scarcely to be expected in one so young, and acquired no doubt from the lessons of so able a tutor, she had dissembled her disinclination to the match with her cousin, on which she knew her father had set his heart,

till it was on the very eve of accomplishment, and had then taken advantage of a dark night, and four stout post-horses, to give her friends the slip.

The fugitives had been traced on their route to the seaside, and Lord Manningham, accompanied by the deserted bridegroom, had gone in pursuit of them; but, from the start which they had got, the vicinity of the coast, and the facility of communication with the continent, little hope was entertained of overtaking them on this side the Channel.

"Sir Willoughby" added, that, under these untoward circumstances, he had been deputed, as a near connection of the family, to wait upon his lordship, and to apprise him of an event which, so much to the affliction of all parties, would render his kind offices unavailing; and expressed the greatest possible regret at having every reason to believe, from information recently received, that the rascally Wiskerewski, who had thus carried off his noble friend's daughter, had not only been a hanger-on in a low gaming-house with a Greek name, but had previously figured on the continent as an escaped *forçat*.

Such, it appeared, was the sum and substance of the communication made to the astounded prelate by Sir Willoughby Pumppe.

His lordship, having dismissed his visitor, went to bed grieved and afflicted at the misfortune of his friend, and indignant at the villany of the seducer. He left London, of course, the next morning, according to his original design, as further delay was impossible, even could his remaining in England a few days longer have allowed him to witness the termination of an affair in which he took so strong an interest.

His arrangements were, therefore, only so far countermanded as regarded his purposed deviation from the direct route to the seaport; and the hour which he had intended to pass at Underdown Hall was devoted to writing these manifestations of his sympathy from the nearest post-town, at which he rested a short time for that purpose.

These despatched, the Right Reverend the Bishop of

Bengal and suite proceeded leisurely on to ——, where he was received with all due attention to etiquette by the Hon. Captain Loblolly, and, having embarked under a grand salute from a regulated number of guns, set sail "in H. M. S. the *Superb*, 74, for the important diocese over which he had been called upon to preside," to the immortal honour of the accuracy of the *Morning Post's* reporter, and perhaps a little to the discomfiture of his hebdomadal *collaborateur*, who, however, put a good face upon the matter, and thus revised his account for the ensuing Sunday :—

"We announced in our last (exclusively) an approaching marriage in high life, which has since taken place. By an inadvertency we were led into a trifling error as to the name of the bride, who is the Honourable Amelia Manningham, daughter of Viscount Stafford, and who was on this happy occasion united in the flowery bands of Hymen to her only surviving relative, Mr. Charles Bullwinkle, of Underdown Hall.

"The Bishop of Bengal did not, we understand, perform the ceremony, having been obliged to depart for Bengal (which is not in the West, but in the East Indies, as our readers will find by referring to the map in Guthrie's Geographical Grammar) on the preceding evening. His lordship sailed in the *Superb*, 74, Capt. Fuggles (and not in the *Skeleton*, Capt. Coffin, which is ordered to Demerara in New Brunswick with overland despatches); the gratifying task consequently devolved upon the exemplary vicar of Underdown, the Rev. Timothy Bustle, D.D., late fellow of Oriel College, Cambridge, by whom the ceremony *was* performed; so that *we were right in the main.*

"The splendid *trousseau* of the bride is the admiration of all who have been so fortunate as to see it; we consider it *extremely wrong* thus idly to lavish on an individual what would support a hundred poor families for a twelvemonth,—but if the happy pair can by such an expenditure encourage industry, and put bread into the mouths of our starving manufacturers, we think, after all, that nevertheless they may very possibly be *quite right.*"

The development of this extraordinary affair gave rise, as may well be imagined, to no slight discussion among the bridal party assembled in the Cedar parlour.

Vexed and indignant as we were, there was, after all, a something so ludicrous in our position, that, had I filled any other situation than that of bridegroom-elect, it is a hundred to one that I should not have been able to forbear laughing.

At this distance of time, when the annoyance is no longer felt, and the "old familiar faces" rise before my mind's eye, the compressed lip and flashing glance of the viscount,—the incensed floridity of the baronet's physiognomy,—Miss Pyefinch's "My goodness me!"—and Bustle's heartfelt "Bless my soul!" cannot but give to the muscles of my countenance an expression very different from that which they exhibited on the day in question.

The captain was the only one who retained his perfect self-possession; the single word "curious!" alone escaped his lips, as reverting to the table his eye most unequivocally demanded,—"Since the bishop will not be here, had we not better begin breakfast?"

But this was not yet to be. I now insisted on my former proposition with respect to the reverend rector's assistance, to which little or no opposition was ultimately offered; some slight excuse for the prelate's absence was made to the bride, who had hitherto been kept in a laudable state of ignorance as to what was going on: and before the gallant officer was allowed to masticate a single custard, that ceremony was performed, which, in our case, had begun,—as it always ends,—with "amazement."

I became the happy husband of my beautiful and blushing Amelia, despite the *laches* of the Bishop of Bengal, and the machinations of "Sir Willoughby Pumppe."

CHAPTER XXI.

Go to then!—we hope here be truths!
SHAKSPEARE.

The charge is prepared, the lawyers are met,
The judges all ranged—a terrible show!
GAY.

Monster, away!—
To the barren deserts fly!
Artaxerxes.

A MYSTERY.—A JOURNEY OF PLEASURE.—ANOTHER OF NECESSITY.—A SYLLOGISM.—SUBSTANCE AND ACCIDENT.—MAJOR, MINOR, AND CONSEQUENCE.—AN ASS AND A BAND-BOX.—A WIG AND A PRIG.—SENIORS AND JUNIORS.—ASSUMPTION.—PERSONATION.—RESIGNATION.—THE ILL-BRED DOG KICKED DOWN STAIRS.

SIR WILLOUGHBY PUMPPE?—Ay, where, who, and what was Sir Willoughby Pumppe?

This was a question much more easily asked than answered:—who could he be?—what motive could he have for thus impeding a marriage, bothering a bishop, and throwing a whole family into confusion?—Pumppe? Lord Manningham had never heard the name, neither had Sir Oliver: it sounded low, vulgar, and monosyllabic, and savoured little of the equestrian dignity; but then the *prænomen*—Willoughby!—that, at least, was aristocratic, and the baronet set himself down seriously to fathom the mystery.

Scarcely had the sound of the wheels that whirled the happy couple from the Hall sunk upon his ears, when, turning from the door whence he had waved them his farewell, Sir Oliver proceeded to what he somewhat humorously denominated his "study."

This was a large and well-proportioned room, which ran nearly the whole length of the south wing of the building, and, to say the truth, was much better furnished with books than the generality of manor-houses, even in the present day. It did not, to be sure, boast a "Penny

Magazine" among its treasures, Sir Thomas More being the only chancellor whose works had found a place upon its shelves; but then,—to say nothing of the whole law library of the learned Sir Marmaduke, replete with the Fletas, the Bractons, and the Cokes of former days, together with (Sir Oliver's magisterial oracle) Williams's edition of "Burn's Justice,"—a bachelor uncle of the present proprietor had devoted no inconsiderable portion of a younger brother's patrimony to the accumulation of the works of the best authors, ancient as well as modern. There had been an antiquary, too, in the family a century since; and many a rare and precious tome had Mr. Dugdale Bullwinkle there deposited, one glimpse of which would have smoothed the wrinkled front of a Ritson, electrified an Ellis, and made poor Tom Hill's* heart leap for joy.

But not to the illuminated Missals, nor even to the Visitations and Genealogies, still less to the classic productions of the Elzevir and Aldine presses, did Sir Oliver now incline. From a shelf near the fireplace, on which stood the "Burn's Justice" aforesaid, "Turpin's Farriery," the "Sporting Magazine," and a few other volumes which he sometimes opened on a rainy morning, he drew forth "Debrett," and commenced a determined consultation of his pages; but in vain did he ransack the "Baronetage," index included,—in vain was Townsend's "Catalogue of Knights" in its turn subjected to the most scrutinizing examination; Pumppes, indeed, he found, more or less illustrious, but not one rejoicing in the adjunct Willoughby.

After a two hours' application to every book in the

* "This is a tract of 1486—seventeen pages originally—five only wanting—two damaged—got it for seventy-two pounds ten shillings—Caxton—only one other copy extant—that in the British Museum."—"And what is it about?" said I, innocently.—"Why, I do *not* happen to know *that*," said Hull (Hill).—"Then why buy it?" said I.—"Buy!" exclaimed he, looking at me through his glass with an expression of astonishment—"I buy thousands of books!—pooh! pooh! millions, my dear sir, in the course of a year,—but I never think of reading them. My dear friend, I have no time to read!"—Hook's "Gilbert Gurney."

room at all calculated to throw a light upon the object of his search, the persevering but baffled investigator was driven to the conclusion that "the fellow was nothing else, after all, but a confounded humbug."

To Amelia and myself, meanwhile, the mystery was none. Fast as the flying steeds bore us from Underdown, they had not reached the first milestone on the London road ere we had decided that the pseudo Mr. Stafford, James Arbuthnot, Esq., and Sir Willoughby Pumppe, were, as Mrs. Malaprop predicates of another impostor, "like Cerberus, three gentlemen in one," and all individualized in the person of my Cousin Nicholas.

Who but himself could have any object in delaying, perhaps breaking off, a marriage which he had already endeavoured to forestall? Who but himself had "the heart to conceive, the head to contrive, and the *tongue* to execute" such a "jolly good hoax?"

The paragraph in the *Post* had evidently apprised him of our plans, and the necessarily immediate departure of the bishop had given him a facility of defeating them. His own attempt at abduction would naturally suggest the story of the elopement, and he would rightly calculate that, under the pressure of circumstances, no time would be left to the good prelate for investigation, even should any suspicion of deceit,—which was most unlikely,—arise in his mind. The disappointment, though but a temporary one, would be at once a revenge upon Amelia for her insensibility to his own *agrémens*, a punishment to her father for turning him so unceremoniously out of the house, and a serious annoyance to myself, whom he had long honoured with an especial portion of his most particular and inveterate dislike.

All, or any, of these incitements were sufficient; and then there was another, not less powerful, perhaps, than them all united—"it would be such desperate good fun!"

Of Nicholas and his pranks, however, I thought less and less every moment; and though at first heartily provoked at his audacity, as well as entertaining a firm resolution of one day visiting on his head the mischievous

tricks he had perpetrated, the possession of Amelia made me too happy now to waste a thought on him or his impertinences.

Domiciled in a beautiful retreat, and enjoying all the charms of a picturesque neighbourhood, together with the more substantial comforts of a delightful home—above all things, happy in each other—time flew over our heads on silken wings, and the very name and existence of my Cousin Nicholas had almost faded from our memories, when they were recalled to my recollection by a letter from my mother, containing intelligence of his recent expulsion from the University, and the great annoyance of Sir Oliver thereat.

The reader has not, as I would fain hope, forgotten a certain reverend gentleman, one Josiah Pozzlethwayte by name, whose skill in dialectics went so far in convincing my uncle Oliver of the improbability of his son's having been in two different places at one and the same time.

Although a sense of justice towards his pupil, not altogether unmixed, perhaps, with an eagerness to vindicate his own superintending vigilance, had, on the occasion alluded to, induced this gentlemen to advocate my Cousin Nicholas's cause with no common zeal, it must not be thence inferred that he was himself altogether satisfied with the general conduct of that ingenious individual, or violently enamoured of his society.

Few indeed of his pupils had, if the truth must be told, occasioned Mr. Pozzlethwayte greater trouble and inconvenience in his capacity of bear-leader. Not to mention that his almost total absence from the lecture-room, through constant indisposition (to attend), promised no great accession of fame to the tutor from the future reputation of the pupil, the frequent escapades of Nicholas, —who, as it was the Reverend Josiah's wont to aver, was "only regular in irregularity, and only consistent in his inconsistency,"—annoyed him not a little in the situation which he held as a Senior Fellow of the college, and, of course, as a *censor morum*. Nor did the evil stop here: he had strong personal grounds for objecting to his conduct.

Immense as were his intellectual advantages, personal

beauty was not Mr. Pozzlethwayte's *forte*. He stood about four feet nothing in his stockings, a stature, which Nicholas once affirmed in his hearing, and upon Shakspeare's authority, to have been originally that of the whole human race, to prove which assertion he quoted Portia's declaration to Shylock, that

"All the souls that are were *four feet* once!"

The vileness of the pun might perhaps have induced the learned gentleman,—who hated any approach to the paranomasia worse than all the other rhetorical figures put together,—to pardon it, as well as the impertinence in which it originated; but this was far from being a solitary instance of my cousin's jocoseness at his expense, —a misfortune in early life had deprived him of one of those members which, as Menenius tells us, in his familiar assimilation of it to a leading demagogue, "being one of the basest, lowest, poorest, yet goes first,"—he had lost his great toe!

This calamity, for such it proved, had not only given a certain peculiarity to his gait, but, from the dancing-master style of progression which it occasioned, had procured him, at the hands of his unfriends, the *sobriquet* of "Pettitoe." It was a point on which the nominee was peculiarly sensitive; and here again did Nicholas, to use his own expression, "touch him on the raw."

A sympathizing *Freshman*, on being informed one day that the loss had been occasioned by the carelessness of a grocer's foreman, who had let a hundred-weight of Gloucester cheese fall upon his customer's foot, exclaimed, in the simplicity of his heart, "Good Heavens! what a shocking accident!" "*Accident?*" quoth a *Man of Standing*. "Nay, no *Accident!*—everybody knows that a *Toe* is a *Substance*." "Pardon me," interrupted Nicholas, "you must have read your Aristotle to very little purpose, gentlemen, if you are not aware that the great Stagyrite defines a *Substance* to be 'To *ov*,'—now this, you will observe, is the very reverse of 'Toe on,'—it is 'Toe off!'

The syllogism was reported to its subject, by "some

d——d good-natured friend," in less than half an hour from its construction.

But keenly as a *jeu de mot* is felt by many, jokes of a more mechanical and practical nature are still less welcome; and these, too, were not wanting.

As if for the very purpose of counterbalancing the niggardliness of Nature by the resources of Art, Mr. Pozzlethwayte had endeavoured, as it were, to atone for the deficiency of one extremity by the redundancy of the other: a magnificent peruke was his crowning glory, similar in form, and not at all inferior in bulk, to that which erst distinguished the renowned and self-bepraised scholar, whose adoption has stamped upon these horse-hair *tumuli* the designation of "*Parrish* Wigs." The amplitude of its projections seemed to set all the laws of gravity,—in every sense of the word,—at defiance, and affected the mind of the spectator with an unpleasant sensation, similar to that produced by a first view of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. The observer was involuntarily impressed with an idea of the impossibility that such a superstructure, so totally at variance with every rule of architecture, and one the *apex* of which so much exceeded its base, could long preserve any position at all approaching to the perpendicular; at the same time its hue, and the general appearance exhibited by the woolly acropolis six days out of the seven, made the feeling heart shudder at the probable loss of life which must necessarily attend its descent. Once a week, however, its snowy brilliance rivalled that of Mont Blanc itself, and gave it the appearance of an impending *avalanche*.

Every Sunday morn, exactly as St. Mary's clock announced the hour of nine, did Giles Gutteridge, the stammering tonsor, emerge from his domicile in Holywell, furnished with a huge bandbox, whose interior seemed bursting with the hairy wonder it contained, newly befrizzled and *poudré à la merveille*.

Now, it so happened that its owner's apartments were situated on the first floor of that side of the Quadrangle which immediately fronted the gateway; it is evident, therefore, that the bearer would have to traverse one

half the square he could possibly reach them; whereas Dr. Battles, the bursar, occupied rooms on the northern side, at a right angle with those of his friend, and, as he regularly shaved on Sundays, it was Mr. Gutteridge's professional duty to look in, on his way, and operate on the reverend functionary's chin.

On all such occasions, it was the wont of the unsuspecting barber to deposit his freight, for the nonce, upon the landing-place, outside his customer's "Oak," for the ten minutes during which he was employed within.

The sun shone clear as usual, no thunder growled, no earthquake shook the Radcliffe to its base, no awful prodigy announced impending calamity, neither were heard

"The grass-plot chains in boding notes to ring,"*

when one fine morning, the hebdomadal abrasion duly performed, a cold chill struck to the very marrow of Gutteridge as he resumed his load;—the box rose in his grasp light as a feather.

To remove the lid was the work of an instant—it was so!—his most horrible anticipations were fearfully realized—*abiit! excessit! evasit! erupit!*—the wig was gone.

For one moment the unhappy one stood paralyzed—the next, two steps, each five times as long as those ordinarily taken by

"Such men as walk in these degenerate days,"

brought him down two flights of stairs, and placed him in the very centre of the Quadrangle.

The Reverend Mr. Pozzlethwayte was at this precise instant of time busily engaged in winding up the peroration of a discourse to be delivered that very morning at St. Mary's;—his Muse—I cannot at this moment call to mind the name of the individual among the "tuneful Nine," who acts as the Pierian inspirer of pulpit oratory—had been unusually costive, and an unwonted stagnation of ideas had already made him long for the *avatar* of Gutteridge.

* Hinc exaudiri gemitus, et sæva sonari
Verbera, tum stridor ferri, tractæque catenæ.
VIRGIL.

It is recorded of a celebrated counsel, learned in the law, that he could never plead to any good purpose without a piece of string to twine round his finger while he was addressing the court—Mr. Pozzlethwayte could never compose without his wig. While yet in the very act of consulting his watch, and wondering at the tardiness of his decorator,

"Strange sounds of grief, lamentations heard i' the air,"

struck on his sensorium;—he rose and applied himself to the window, when, in the very centre of the grass-plot, irreverently trampling on that sacred sod, fenced in by privilege from every tread less hallowed than that of a senior fellow, stood,—or rather stamped,—the infuriate Gutteridge, writhing in all the contortions of demoniacal possession.—His uplifted hands and eyes seemed as they were invoking the vengeance of all the gods on somebody—or something,—but on whom, or what, remained a mystery.

The learned tutor threw up the sash, and called loudly on the infuriated *tonsor* for an explanation.

It has been already hinted that Mr. Gutteridge had, like another great orator of antiquity, a slight impediment in his speech—"Wi—wi—wi—wi—wi!"—was all that could be collected from him by his interrogator, till, raising his eyes in the direction in which the outstretched arms of the supposed maniac were pointing, a sight arrested them which froze his heart within him.

There was the Wig!—*his* Wig—THE Wig, *par excellence*, of the whole University, enshrouding the temples of the first murderer, whose stony brow seemed to derive tenfold rigidity from the addition, while,—such fantastic tricks does fancy play us,—a lively imagination might have traced a horrid laughter mingling with the convulsions of the expiring Abel, while even the noble and noseless Alfred, and

"Thy grim-bearded bust, Erigena!"*

seemed to grin in ghastly glee from their elevation above the buttery hatch.

* Heber.

"The Wi—wi—wi—wi!"—still shrieked the frantic tonsor, but,

"Ere he could achieve the *word* proposed,"

Pozzlethwayte was already by his side, cravat-less, hat-less, trencher-less,—and, alas! wig-less;—in all the unreadiness of college *déshabille*, and presenting,—as my Cousin Nicholas, who was quietly contemplating the scene from his window, very classically observed,—"the *beau idéal*, in everything but size, of a

"Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui *Wiggum* ademptum!"

The porters were by this time alarmed, and one of the most agile among them, climbing up the pedestal, set his foot on Abel's shoulder, and stretched out his hand to secure the ravished peruke that frowned far, far above the reach of its bereaved owner; but whether Æolus owed the tutor a spite, or that the "Little Breezes" seized on this opportunity of avenging themselves for their constant exclusion from his chambers, the motion, occasioned by the removal of the caxon, fanned into activity the embers of a half-extinguished cigar, which had been for some time smouldering among the bushy thickets of its *occiput*.

"Where there is so much smoke there must be some fire," was the logical deduction of the scout, and, as he paused to examine, the truth of his inference was demonstrated by almost instantaneous ignition. Two or three slaps with the wig, vigorously inflicted on the back of Cain, at length extinguished the flame; but serious, not to say irreparable, damage had already been done to the comatose fabric, which still hissed, and curled, and fizzled, and sent forth odours the farthest in the world from Sabæan.

To preach before the assembled heads of houses in a jasey that looked and smelt like a singed sheep's head, was impossible, and, as no substitute could be found *sur le champ* for the dilapidated wig, its discomfited proprietor was obliged to seek a deputy for the preacher.

But who was the nefarious depredator?—Who the

perpetrator of all this villany?—Of that no proof could be obtained, though diligently sought for. General suspicion, unquestionably, pointed at Nicholas, who had been seen in the Quad when Gutteridge was entering it, and who had even asked that individual, "H—h—h—how he d—d—did?" a sympathetic hesitation in delivery seeming to have seized upon him in the very moment of inquiry. But he had passed on, as he declared, to his own rooms;—nobody could gainsay the fact, and moreover, he denied all knowledge of the larceny, "upon his honour."—Such an averment it were heresy to doubt; still, from the undisguised amusement which he had exhibited at the window, and his subsequent introduction of a song at "the Phœnix," which was considered to bear upon the subject, the injured Pozzlethwayte was convinced that, if not a principal in the robbery, he was at least *particeps criminis*, and "an accessary before the fact."

"The Wig's the thing!—the Wig,—the Wig,—
The Wig's the thing!—the Wig,—the Wig;
When portly parsons claim the pig,
And gouty aldermen look big,
I do not say they are not wise,—
I only say, in vulgar eyes,
The wisdom's in the Wig!"

(*Grand Chorus of Under-Graduates.*)
"The Wig!—the Wig!—the Wig!—the Wig!—
The wisdom's in the Wig!!"

"Such were the sounds that o'er the crested pride" of Josiah Pozzlethwayte "scattered wild dismay," as he returned, a day or two afterwards, from evening chapel. The windows of the *Symposium* were all open, every syllable came o'er his ear, not indeed

"Like the sweet South,
That breathes upon a bank of violets,"

but with a distinctness of articulation which it needed not the remembrance of his misfortune to render complete. The voice of my Cousin Nicholas,—the *primo tenore*,—sounded high above the rest in beautiful intonation;—the victim even fancied he saw him peeping at

him over the blinds :—from that moment all his doubts were merged in certainty, and dislike was converted into a sentiment that approximated as nearly to hatred as such a passion can be supposed to exist in "a celestial breast."

"It is easy," says a homely proverb, "to find a stick to beat a dog;" besides, when one has positively determined that, right or wrong, the cur shall not escape castigation, a cudgel is generally kept handy. It was scarcely necessary to make occasions for complaint against my cousin;—alas! he was in the habit of affording but too many ready made;—and it soon became apparent that a war to the knife was raging, if not openly proclaimed, between tutor and pupil.

"Crosses" and "Impositions" fell thick on the devoted head of Nicholas, who revenged himself, as best he might, by a corresponding shower of lampoons.

To this species of weapon, certain anecdotes and adventures related of Mr. Pozzlethwayte's *première jeunesse*, rendered him peculiarly obnoxious, and "a column of advertisements from the *Times*, to be rendered into Latin verse," inflicted upon my cousin, was followed by a discharge of odes and epigrams, supposed to be the production of the same pen.

There was, in the days of which I speak, a *locale* in every college which corresponded, in some of its uses,—it had others—with the *Pasquin* and *Marforio* of Rome, and, as the great majority of resident members were in the habit of resorting thither at least once a day, few better opportunities of disseminating anonymous effusions could be found, than by means of an *affiche* in a situation so frequented.

Here, then, did the lines alluded to constantly appear. The allusions were generally caught up; copies of the different squibs multiplied apace, and the same "good-natured friend," of whom I have before spoken, usually placed them, with a most praiseworthy regularity, on the table of the Reverend Josiah.

Conjecture again fixed on Nicholas as the author, but again nothing appeared in the copies positively to fasten

on him the imputation,—and it was considered *infra dig.* for a senior fellow to visit the originals, for the purpose of identifying the handwriting ;—a fallacious test after all.

The campaign was at length rather unexpectedly brought to a close, and my Cousin Nicholas, like many a great man before him, was finally defeated—by wine. In his sober senses he would have defied a world in arms, but "he, whom nor storms nor shipwreck could subdue," fell prostrate, alas ! before a batch of Burgundy.

My Cousin Nicholas had procured from the vaults of the immortal Latimer a choice case of "genuine Chambertin ;"—the conventional name for a mixture of brandy and red ink, then in high estimation among gentlemen commoners—a dozen of his allies were summoned, and "to it they went like French falconers ;" for all who remember our Universities a quarter of a century ago, will bear sorrowful testimony to the occasional excesses, the compotations, and the revellings within those sacred walls, where now, in accordance with the better spirit of modern times, and to the everlasting honour of Father Mathew, the "men" quaff chiefly from those

"Cups that cheer, but not inebriate,"

and only

"Let the *butter'd* toast go round."

As none of my cousin's party were unpractised hands, their *sederunt* was a protracted one.

Towards midnight the mirth grew fast and furious, when Pozzlethwayte, whose ears were invaded by the sound of their orgies, meditated an assault. He had even made his *sortie*, taken the stairs by *escalade*, and was about to dash in upon the garrison, sword (trencher) in hand, when, as his fingers yet grasped the handle of the door, the portentous sound of

"If any presume
To come into the room,
We'll fling the dog out of the window!"

echoed as an *antistrophe* by half a score voices in *all*, gave him pause ; Minerva, in the shape of cool reflection, came to his aid, and threw her protecting *ægis* around him.

Gently and imperceptibly did his grasp relax,—softly, as one who treadeth on eggs, did he retrace his way across the Quadrangle, and

"With uneven footstep press the sod,"

till he reached the sanctuary of his own apartment.

Not so Nicholas and his pot-companions;—on they went, pouring the enemy into their mouths "to steal away the brains" of those who were possessed of such a commodity, till, as is not uncommon with persons puffed up, whether by wine or vanity, a general vituperation of "things as they are" was succeeded by an eager longing after "things as they ought to be."

"The grass-plot!—what a piece of 'ecclesiastical tyranny' that none should be allowed to tread upon it under the degree of A.M.!—what a piece of folly that it should be a grass-plot at all!—a useless, uncropped, four-cornered bit of pasture!—browsed by no herd,—enamelled with no flock!—wasting its 'greenery' on the desert air, and altogether unprofitable to man and beast.

"Then, too, the miserable and stunted shrubs that deformed the principal's garden!—green to no purpose,—fragrant to no end;—who saw them?—who enjoyed them?—No one,—or next to none. It was a wanton waste of the gifts of Nature—the thing must be reformed!—ay, Radical Reform! that was what was wanting!"

And accordingly, the "New, Grand, Botanico-horticultural and Agricultural Society of King's Hall and College of Brasenose" was established on the spot, with my Cousin Nicholas for its president.

Sofas from the neighbouring rooms were put in instant requisition, and formed admirable substitutes for ploughs and drills to break up and convert the much abused pasture into arable land; while the laurels, myrtles, with such other shrubs as were not too firmly imbedded in the soil for ready extraction, yielded to the united energies of the "Reforming Committee," and, instead of languishing as heretofore in isolated insignificance, formed, when duly arranged against the vice-principal's door, a bower, scarce inferior to that of our first parents in Paradise, as described

by the immortal Milton. In one respect it may even be said to have had the advantage over it;—Adam's "proud alcove" was altogether innocent of candles, but here were lights innumerable;—wax from the rooms,—lamps from the stairs,—lanterns from—nobody knows where;—the very scout's "muttons" were called into play, till the "enterprising Mr. Gee" himself, could he have witnessed the brilliance of this Academic Vauxhall, would have confessed himself outdone, and have blushed to charge "a shilling" for the inferior glories of his gala nights.

Alas! alas! why is it that all human joys are so evanescent? why is it that we find them ever

> "Like clouds that tint the morning skies,
> As bright—as transient too?"

The "bright clouds" of the poet had hardly begun "to tint the morning skies" at all, when an irruption of the college janissaries disturbed the philanthropists in the very height of their enjoyment. They who could run did run,—they who could not run fell,—and were picked up again; while my Cousin Nicholas, their illustrious president and arch-reformer, covered with grease and glory, was captured and conducted to his couch, hiccuping, as he sank into the arms of Morpheus,

> "What have we with day to do?"—(hic)—
> "Sons of Care,"—(hic—)

mind you, put out the lights, you d—d rascals!"

My Cousin Nicholas had now reached the zenith of his academical career, and we have henceforward only to

> "Mark the mild lustre that gilt his decline!"

On awaking the next morning, he found, Wolsey-like, that a killing frost had nipped his root—that he, "good easy man," was about to fall, "never to rise again"—in Oxford;—therefore, with all that firmness of purpose, and promptness of decision, which are the distinguishing characteristics of great minds, he resolved so to dispose his robe as to fall with dignity.

A summons before the seniority he anticipated, nor did he deceive himself as to its necessary result. But the

emergency found him not unprepared for it; he had long since contemplated the possibility of such an event taking place, and his mighty soul rose equal to the occasion.

It was past one o'clock P.M. The various classes had been dismissed, and the Common Room already exhibited his

"Judges all met, a terrible show."

At the upper end of the apartment sat the principal, and the fellows were arranging themselves to his right and left according to their standing. The immediate appearance of the delinquents,—for two other of the rioters were included in the same bill of attainder,—was expected, when the door opened, and Sir Lawrence O'Thwackes and Mr. St. John Gomerrily, gentlemen commoners both, entered the room.

My Cousin Nicholas did not appear, but the space he should have filled was occupied by the Reverend Josiah Pozzlethwayte in person, who, acting as "bodkin" to the other two, advanced with them, in his usual saltatory style, to the bottom of the table.

His unexpected appearance in such a situation arrested the embryo rebuke already trembling on the lips of the principal. That dignitary gazed on the apparition before him with astonishment. One instant previous he had been consulting with the very gentleman now *vis-à-vis* to him, and had received his vote for the ostracism of all the offenders. How he could have left the room in the interval was amazing! Yet there he stood,—arrayed in his snuff-embrowned suit of sables, with wig, green goggles, and pointed toe,—perfect in his individuality.

An exclamation from his right drew off the president's attention; he turned, and to his consternation,—I will not say horror,—beheld there another Pozzlethwayte!—*alter et idem!*—in wig—in goggles,—and in toe he was the same,—but evidently quivering with suppressed agitation, while his "double," at the other end of the room, stood regarding the scene with the most complacent equanimity.

"Bless me! what can be the meaning of all this?" asked the astounded "Head."

"*Mon Dieu! il y en est deux!*" quoth the junior fellow, as he quoted the despairing exclamation of the French profligate.

"Bless my heart!"—"why, Mr. Pozzlethwayte!"—"why, who on earth is this?"—&c. &c. &c.—burst simultaneously from different members of the congress as the seniority arose in confusion; meanwhile the two accused, and their extraordinary middle-man, preserved their composure, and appeared to be the only unembarrassed persons in the whole assembly.

The *agitated* Pozzlethwayte at length found voice, and, pointing to Pozzlethwayte the *composed*,

"See!" he exclaimed, "see, gentlemen!—I knew how it would be!—it is all a part of the system—all done to harass and annoy *me*—I was sure it would be so——"

"What is the meaning of this absurd masquerade?" interrupted the principal, now thoroughly certified by the voice as to which was the real Simon Pure;—"who are you, sir?—and where is Mr. Bullwinkle?"

"Here, sir, at your orders," returned the fictitious Pozzlethwayte, reverently bowing, as he raised his glasses, and darting from beneath them glances of tenfold obliquity upon the company.

"What do you mean, sir, by presenting yourself in this ridiculous dress?"

"Ridiculous?—pardon me, sir," replied Nicholas, with much seeming humility; "I have, I regret to say, too often been reproved for unintentional violation of the University costume, and a *cross* was placed against my name no longer ago than last week on that very account, by my respected tutor who now sits beside you;—I have since determined to make him my model in dress, as in everything else,—and, to say the truth, my friends flatter me by declaring that I have succeeded indifferently well."

The cool impudence of this reply was not to be borne; the seniority rose *en masse*, and soon after broke up "in much-admired disorder."

Mr. Bullwinkle and his tittering companions were in the mean time ordered to withdraw, and in the course of the day received, jointly and severally, an official intima-

tion that they "were no longer to consider themselves members of that university."

And so my Cousin Nicholas took his leave of Oxford—

HIC CESTUS ARTEMQUE REPONIT!

CHAPTER XXII.

——— The grief that does not speak
Whispers the o'erfraught heart, and bids it break.
Macbeth.

How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child!
Lear.

A BARONET IN A PUCKER—IN A COFFIN.—GRIEF AND REMORSE.—TOO LATE!—RESUSCITATION.

Sir Oliver's wrath was, as I well knew it would be, fearful;—sentence of the greater excommunication and perpetual banishment was forthwith pronounced against the principal offender. I say the principal, because, although Nicholas unquestionably came in for the chief portion of his indignation, yet the various members of the "Seniority" were by no means absolved in his estimation.

They had disgraced a Bullwinkle! and that act, whether done justly or unjustly, with or without a sufficing reason, was, in the eyes of the representative of the redoubted Roger, nothing less than a high crime and misdemeanour.

Letters which we received about this time, both from my mother and Miss Pyefinch, concurred in representing the baronet as having been in a state of continued excitement, almost amounting to frenzy, from the moment of his receiving the principal's official notification of the removal of his son's name from the books, together with a statement of the cause of his having been thus unceremoniously sent to the right about.

All this I fully expected to hear; but, I own, I was not prepared for the shock which followed, and which

exhibited to me the misconduct of Nicholas in still more glaring colours.

His follies and improprieties had at length made him little less than a parricide; and, as I read the following paragraph from a London journal, which I took up accidentally at a little inn in the Isle of Wight, whither Amelia and myself had gone on a short excursion, I was not more grieved at the event which it announced, than shocked by the conviction that his son's misbehaviour had broken the poor old gentleman's heart.

At the head of the list of deaths was—

"Suddenly, of apoplexy, at his seat, Underdown Hall, Kent, Sir Oliver Bullwinkle, Bart., in the sixty-third year of his age. He is succeeded in his title and estates by his only son and heir, now Sir Nicholas Bullwinkle."

Poor Sir Oliver!—This, then, was the end of all his hopes and fears—of all his cares and anxieties for the welfare of one who had as surely destroyed him as if he had plunged a knife into his bosom!

Poor Uncle Oliver!—Till this moment I had never known how much I had loved him. To me his kindness had been, from the very first, as warm as it was undeviating; and I well knew that in his affections I held a place second only to that so unworthily occupied by his heartless offspring.

The date of the announcement was that of the third day after we had quitted the Abbey, on the little tour I have alluded to, and where, I doubted not, full details of the melancholy event were even at this moment awaiting my return. But my course was already determined on; and, crossing over that very day to Portsmouth, I sent Amelia home under the protection of her servants, and placing myself in the mail, reached London at an early hour on the following morning.

Notwithstanding his eccentricities, my mother was, as I well knew, deeply, fondly attached to her departed brother, and would at such a time need all the consolation a son's attentions could bestow. Besides, Underdown Hall was now the property of my Cousin Nicholas; and under any roof which called him master, I was certain

she would not choose to remain one moment longer than might be absolutely necessary.

I had partaken of some slight refreshment at the hotel, and had ordered a chaise and four to be got in readiness as quickly as possible, while I just stepped out to give my tailor some orders, rendered necessary by the melancholy event that had occurred, when, as I turned the corner of Sackville Street, my arm was grasped from behind.

I stopped, and beheld my Cousin Nicholas himself.

He was dressed in deep mourning; and, to do him justice, I never saw grief and affliction more strongly depicted in any one's countenance in my life. It was some time before he could find words to address me; they seemed, like Macbeth's, to "to stick in his throat," and the big drops stood on his forehead, while a convulsive choking appeared to impede his utterance. The encounter was an unexpected one to both of us, and, to me at least, unwelcome. I gazed at him in silence; tears at last came to his relief. "Charles!" he exclaimed, in a voice scarcely audible from emotion, "for Heaven's sake, pity me!—I have murdered my poor father!"

Incensed against him as I was, and not without reason, on my own account, there was a something so truly pitiable in his whole appearance, in the misery expressed by his glazed eye and hollow cheek, that, spite of myself, I could not look at him without feeling my anger sensibly giving way to compassion. It was not at such a moment, at all events, that I could dwell on personal injuries; it was no time for revenge, or for heaping reproaches on one whom the bitterest remorse had already stricken to the earth. I took Sir Nicholas by the arm, and retraced my steps with him to the Clarendon.

When at length his emotion permitted him to speak, I learned that he had but just arrived in town, having preceded me to London by little more than twenty-four hours.

On leaving the University, he told me he had taken up his temporary abode with his friend Hanbury, in Sussex, where he had intended to remain till time and

the mediation of friends should so far induce his father's wrath to relax, as to hold out to him some hope of a reconciliation. The absurdity of his late conduct, and the injury done by it to his own character and prospects in life, had, as he assured me, already made a very strong impression upon him; the lesson he had received had not been thrown away; and he had fully made up his mind to discard his follies, abandon his mischievous frolics for ever, and to do everything in his power towards regaining the place which he felt he had forfeited, both in society and in the affections of his friends.

"Incredible as you may perhaps think it, Cousin Charles," he added, "it was on yourself that I placed my firmest reliance. To you I have much to answer for—more perhaps than you are even now aware of. I have acted by you like a scoundrel and a madman; yet on you, I repeat, I had rested all my hopes of obtaining my father's forgiveness, and the pardon of others whom I have still more grossly sinned against. Grave cause as you have against me, for I know you too well to suppose I could make you more than temporarily my dupe, I had made up my mind to write to you—to throw myself on your mercy—to confess to you the whole of my folly, my madness—and to plead the only, the miserable excuse that exists for my infatuated conduct, when, to my utter consternation, the papers informed me of the deplorable——"

He covered his face with his hands, burst into a flood of tears, and seemed as if he would have knelt before me.

I shrank from so degrading an act of self-abasement, and, in a tone which, I fear, had at least as much of contempt as pity in it, desired him to compose himself.

My Cousin Nicholas would have proceeded to confession, but I stopped him at once with the remark, that other matters had at present a prior demand on the attention of both of us.

He had come, as I now found, to London immediately on reading the account of his father's decease in the papers, and had already employed the time during which he had been in town in despatching the necessary tradesmen

and orders to the Hall, for the performance of the late baronet's obsequies, in a manner suitable to the rank and station which he had so recently held in the county. Having just completed his arrangements, he was about to proceed to Underdown, when he saw me pass a shop, in which he was making the last purchases requisite for his journey, and arrested my progress as I have mentioned.

Finding that I was myself about to proceed to the same destination, he now requested to be permitted to accompany me down, adding, that it would give him the opportunity for which he so earnestly longed, of making his avowal, and of affording to me and mine all the reparation yet in his power.

After some little hesitation, I agreed to his proposal, and having briefly written to my several tradesmen such directions as were necessary, we stepped into the chaise, which was waiting for me, and set out together at a rapid pace for the Hall.

Scarcely were we fairly launched from the stony breakers of Bond Street, into the smooth water of Macadamization, when my Cousin Nicholas began, as he phrased it, "to make a clean breast of it," and with every token of sincere contrition, went into a recapitulation of his offences against us all.

He told me, that at our never-to-be-forgotten interview with her at the theatre, the impression made upon him by Amelia's beauty was not inferior to that which it had produced upon myself,—that he had, in short, to use his own expression, "fallen deeply, madly in love with her at first sight;" but that this passion, like many of a similar kind which had preceded it, might perhaps have yielded to time and absence, had not a combination of fortuitous circumstances occurred to foster and increase its force.

It will be recollected that, on parting with me in Jermyn Street,—after I had, as we both then thought, safely marked down my bird at Mrs. Morgan's,—Nicholas had repaired to what—such is the retrogression of modern refinement—*may* now be mentioned, even to ears polite, as a "hell," in the vicinity.

The usual flocks of rooks and pigeons were found con-

gregated within its interior, and, flush with the supply so recently received from myself, he plunged at once into all the mysteries of *rouge et noir*.

A very few deals had taken place when an "intelligencer" entered with the news of an attack meditated by the police, and appointed to take place that very night. The party broke up abruptly, and Nicholas, who had been hitherto a winner, and was not sorry for so good an excuse to pocket his earnings, found himself once more in the street.

As he passed Mrs. Morgan's door, the often-mentioned dark green chariot caught his eye, with Amelia and her antiquated *chaperon* in the act of getting into it.

The real state of the case flashed at once upon him, and, as the carriage drove leisurely along, he had no difficulty in keeping it in view, till he saw it finally deposit its lovely freight at her father's mansion.

His first impulse was, as he assured me, to make me acquainted with the discovery; but, alas! the event proved that the warning of the bard is not an idle one,—

> "Friendship, take heed!—if woman interfere,
> Be sure the hour of thy destruction's near."

After what he declared to have been a very severe struggle, passion prevailed over principle, and my cousin found himself unable to renounce the advantage which his knowledge of the residence of our fair *incognita* gave him over me, his rival.

When he had ascertained the real name and condition of the lady, and her relationship to myself,—all of which he had accomplished, without difficulty, during the interval of my journey to Underdown,—the struggle, he protested, recommenced; and when, on the evening of my return to town, I had made him my confidant with respect to Lord Manningham's intentions in my favour, the secret was actually upon his lips.

But my evil genius, it seems, again prevailed, and accident again secured his triumph.

> "How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds
> Makes ill deeds done!"

"Had you not incautiously let fall that letter of your mother's, Cousin Charles, I verily believe I should yet have proved honest to you, and, after diverting myself a little longer with your perplexities, have at once removed them; but the temptation was irresistible. One moment only was your attention distracted by the waiter, but that moment was decisive—to seize, to exchange the letter for one of my own, was the work of an instant; the hurry with which you followed me in pursuit of an *ignis fatuus*, conjured up, I confess, for my purpose, forbade all examination, and I saw with triumph that my hastily-formed plan had succeeded; the substituted epistle was already in your pocket.

"A thousand and a thousand times during the remainder of that day did conscience fly in my face, and tell me that I was acting most unworthily;—a thousand times did I resolve to confess all to you, to restore the letter I had purloined, and trust to your affection for my pardon; but then the image of Amelia rose in beauty before me,—and the die was cast.

"With my subsequent conduct you must be but too well acquainted; its only palliation is that I was no longer my own master; every thought, every feeling of right and wrong, was absorbed in the one hope of obtaining, by any means, the paragon of her sex.

"A very few days, as I was well assured, were all that would be afforded me ere the imposture must inevitably be discovered; my own imprudence contributed to shorten even that brief interval, and, in a moment of infatuation and despair, I was hurried into that Quixotic enterprise which infatuation and despair alone could have inspired.

"Nay," he continued, "I will own that, from the date of my more intimate acquaintance with Miss Stafford and her perfections, the strongest personal jealousy of yourself was added to my other bad passions; and this, together with the envy at your good fortune which it excited, induced me subsequently to play off a most abominable trick upon the Bishop of Bengal, which would, as I hoped, have the effect of deferring, if only for a few hours, a

marriage so destructive to all my hopes, and one which I could not bear to think upon.

"But, oh! Charles," continued he, seeing my colour rising, for my patience here was sorely tried, "spare me, —spare me, I beseech you, the reproaches which I so justly merit; think,—think what my feelings must be at such a moment as this, when I avow that, guilty as I have been towards you, there is another crime that lies yet heavier on my heart,—my poor, poor father!—yes, Charles, it is but too true that the individual who so atrociously insulted him was his own son!

"I had not, I scarce need say, quitted London, as you believed, but had accompanied Captain Hanbury, the brother of a college friend of mine, to the theatre, when, to my astonishment no less than alarm, I came plump upon Sir Oliver. I knew all the consequences of his finding me in London;—I knew the violence of his anger when thoroughly provoked; not an instant was left me for consideration. What was to be done?—I denied, disowned, gracious Heaven!—I even threatened him!"

A violent burst of anguish here interrupted the speaker, nor could I help being moved by the bitterness of his remorse.

Resentment again gave way to compassion; I could not,—no, I *could* not trample on the self-abased creature beside me,—I could not quench the smoking flax, nor bruise the broken reed. He had behaved scandalously, it is true, but he was miserable,—the image of his dead father, too,—of that father who had so loved us both, seemed to rise between us, and demand forgiveness for his erring but repentant child.

Before we had reached Dartford I had solemnly accorded to my Cousin Nicholas an entire amnesty, and had ventured to promise him as much on the part of Amelia.

From this moment I endeavoured to change the subject, and to converse with him on his own affairs,—on his future plans and prospects,—but found it exceedingly difficult to withdraw his mind at all from the course of bitter self-reproach which his thoughts had taken.

He was perpetually reverting to the subject of the disgraceful conduct he had pursued towards his father.

A chaise and four, he told me, and the connivance of the college porter, had enabled him to anticipate the arrival of Sir Oliver in Oxford,—which he was sure would follow,—by several hours, and, secure in the secrecy of his friend the captain, who had promised to keep out of the way for a day or two, he had managed to escape detection by the connivance of the college servants; but the remembrance of his behaviour on that occasion to a parent who so doted on him would, he continued to assure me, embitter every moment of his future existence. He spoke of himself as one of the worst of murderers, and it was almost impossible to divert him from these gloomy reflections, or to draw his attention to the state of his worldly concerns.

From what at length fell from him, however, I gathered that his pecuniary embarrassments were, in fact, much more considerable than I had anticipated; he even hinted at the probability that a temporary visit to the Continent might be advisable, if not absolutely necessary.

This was an idea which I rather encouraged than repressed; as, though I had made up my mind not to refuse my assistance towards extricating him from his difficulties, it struck me that, for many reasons, his absence from England, for the present, would be a relief to all parties.

When we reached Sittingbourne, we stopped to change horses, and alighted to partake of some refreshment at the Rose; and here,—as I verily believe for the first time in his life,—did the appetite of Nicholas altogether fail him; he forced down a mouthful or two with difficulty, and remained totally absorbed in his own thoughts, which continued to be apparently of the most painful description; what was yet more extraordinary, he did not show the slightest inclination to fly to his old resource, the bottle, for relief; nor was it without great persuasion on my part that he was at length, with difficulty, induced to swallow a single glass of sherry. I wanted no other proof of the sincerity of his grief,—at least for the time being.

At a short distance below the village above named, the approach to the Hall diverged from the great turnpike road to Dover, and, turning abruptly to the right, after meandering for several miles through a rich and varied country, brought us once more to the well-known entrance of the Underdown domain.

The sun had set in glory, and the shades of twilight were fast closing in upon a lovely evening, as we reached the well-remembered avenue, whose majestic trees, the venerable growth of centuries, threw a still darker shadow upon all beneath them.

At the extremity nearest to the mansion, and at a right angle with one corner of the building, rose a splendid oak, "the monarch of the wood," standing, as it were, proudly aloof,—it had been Sir Oliver's favourite tree.

A rustic bench encircled its time-worn trunk, and here, a hundred and a hundred times, had I seen my poor uncle in happier days, gazing with an honest pride upon the sylvan scene before him,—the fair domain transmitted down to him from so many Bullwinkles,—now like himself at peace,—while he inhaled the sedative fragrance of a pipe of the best Virginia.

Alas! poor Uncle Oliver! Never again should I behold that open friendly countenance, in which might be read, as in a book, every thought of his guileless heart!—never again should I encounter the kindly glance of that eye beaming on me with all but paternal love!—never again receive the fervent pressure of that hearty and affectionate grasp!—never again should I hear——

Why, what on earth was that? How deceptive the unreal mockeries of fancy!

> "And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown,"

how often does she, in her vagaries,

> "Give to airy nothings
> A local habitation and a name!"

I could have sworn at the very moment that these, and thoughts like these, were rushing on my mind in an over-

whelming flood of fond reminiscence,—even then I could have sworn that I heard again that voice, now hushed for ever by the still, cold hand of death,—that very cough, too, which exhibited the strength, rather than the weakness, of my poor uncle's lungs, seemed to issue again, as heretofore, from beneath the tree of his love; nay, I could almost have believed that a dim and shadowy form, resembling that of him that was gone, was yet hovering around its gnarled and knotty trunk.

The same, or some similar idea, seemed to have stricken my Cousin Nicholas, for rousing himself from the corner of the chaise in which he had been for some time silently reclining, he suddenly exclaimed, with a vivacity that startled me,

"Gracious Heaven! what is this?"

Then breaking one of the front glasses in his eagerness to let it down, he called loudly to the drivers to stop.

My eye followed the direction of his own, and again, to my thinking, I saw my Uncle Oliver, "in his habit as he lived," rise deliberately from the accustomed seat, and advance towards the carriage.

Nicholas uttered a shriek, and sprang from the vehicle. Before I could follow, he was on his knees upon the greensward, his hands uplifted, and his eyes starting from his head with horror.

"Father!—dear father!" he cried in agony, "come not from the grave to curse your son. Pardon!—oh, pardon!"

He fell upon his face as he spoke; and I was electrified as I distinctly heard the phantom reply to his adjuration, —"Go to the devil, you infernal scoundrel!"

A mist seemed to gather on my senses, and I could scarcely summon up resolution enough to quit the chaise. When, however, I had accomplished my descent, there still lay Sir Nicholas Bullwinkle, literally writhing with agony on the turf.

"Mercy! mercy!" came from his lips, in suffocating accents,—"Pardon!—Mercy!—Forgive, blest shade!"

"Blest fool's head!" returned the spectre, to my inde-

scribable astonishment. "Get up this instant, you rascal, and don't lie sprawling there!"

And it looked all the while so like the late Sir Oliver Bullwinkle, that, had I not known him to be defunct, I could have made oath it was his very self.

"Get up, I say, scoundrel!" continued the *Eidolon;* and at the same moment the sound of a kick, from what seemed to be its foot, as the shadowy member vehemently encountered the most undefended part of my Cousin Nicholas's person, excited in my mind a strong suspicion of its materiality.

Mine eye had by this time "well examined the parts" of the apparition, and

"Found them perfect Oliver."

"Good Heavens!" I exclaimed, "can it be?—Sir Oliver?—and you really are *not* dead?"

"Dead? Dead be d——d!" quoth the spirit, ejaculating as if on purpose to illustrate that obscure line of Gray's,—

"Even in our ashes live their wonted fires!"

"No more dead than yourself, if you come to that. All a bam of that rascally newspaper—put in by some lying vagabond on purpose: this fellow as likely as anybody!"

And so it was!—so it must be; a hundred circumstances flashed on my memory to prove it: his difficulties, his debts, his menaced incarceration! Mr. Bullwinkle, *ci-devant* of Brasenose,—the disgraced of Oxford,—the discarded of his father,—the rejected of Rabbi Aaron Ximenes,—could not as a *desdichado* have preserved his personal liberty one single week;—it was reserved for the brilliant genius of my Cousin Nicholas thus to turn disaster into victory, and, by a splendid *coup de maître*, to convert foes into auxiliaries, drawing supplies from the very quarters whence he had the most to apprehend.

His tailor, like many,—not to say most,—of the West-End *Schneiders*, dealt at least as much in bills as breeches; and "Sir Nicholas Bullwinkle," the youthful and extravagant baronet of six thousand a year, not only obtained an

immediate cessation of the hostilities proclaimed against "N. Bullwinkle, *Esquire*," but found every "accommodation" he could require, "on the most reasonable terms," while, as no "Grand-National-United-Tailors'-Strike" was in those unenlightened days so much as dreamt of in the most glowing visions of the Humes and Owens, complete mourning for the whole of his embryo establishments in town and country was promised, without fear of failure, "at six hours' notice," and the professional credit of Mr. Kerseymere Kite pledged for its delivery within the time.

Messrs. Birdseye, Mapleton, and Company, who had not long since furnished a pleasant little retreat in the King's-road, Fulham, for a female relation of the Bullwinkles,—whose name, by the way, Sir Oliver had most unaccountably omitted to register in the family pedigree, but for whose ottomans, *chiffonnières*, and *chaises longues*, my Cousin Nicholas had very generously made himself responsible,—were no less polite. An order for a splendid funeral, and for the hanging Underdown Church with the finest black broad-cloth, accompanied with a hint that the heir was rather short of ready cash till "the will should be proved, and arrangements made with the bankers," were both immediately taken. The deceased baronet, it was faithfully promised by the Birdseye polyonomy, should be interred in a manner worthy the dignified representative of the Conqueror's standard-bearer; while a cheque for five hundred pounds, offered, and, I need scarcely say, accepted, as a temporary loan, evinced at once the opulence and the liberality of the firm.

Though not fully aware of all these and similar particulars at the moment, Nicholas had, in the course of the communications which he had made to me, said enough to furnish me with a clue to his whole plot. Doubtless he had taken his measures too well to permit any proof to exist that he was, in fact, the fabricator of the paragraph of which he had thus reaped the benefit, and of which, in common with the rest of us, he would, no doubt, profess to have been the dupe.

In the mean while he had succeeded in freeing himself

—for a time at least—from importunity, not to say a jail: he had raised the wind for his intended Continental excursion,—the only part of his story I now believed in,—and he had, moreover, succeeded, by means of this "jolly good hoax," in "humbugging" me into a condonation which, disgusted as I was with him, it was quite impossible for me, as a gentleman, to retract.

Such consummate duplicity, however, precluded the possibility of my taking any farther notice of him. Seizing, therefore, Sir Oliver's arm, we turned together towards the Hall, leaving the penitent to the full enjoyment of his raptures at finding his father still in the land of the living, and to rub off at his leisure the verdure which his black net "tights" had contracted from his long-continued genuflexions on the moist grass.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Nay then, let the Devil wear black!
Hamlet.

Go hop me over every kennel home,
For you shall hop without my custom, sir.
Petruchio.

UNEXPECTED VISITORS.—MORE FREE THAN WELCOME.—"DON'T YOU WISH YOU MAY GET IT?"—AN ATTACK.—AN AMBUSCADE.—A REPULSE.—A RETREAT.

Sir Oliver and myself pursued our way towards the house; and it would not have been very easy to determine which of the two felt the most astonished and gratified at so unexpectedly encountering the other,—one a dear friend whom he believed to be dead,—the other a no less dear relative whom he knew to be married.

As both these conditions are apt to imply a separation from former ties and habits to a rather considerable extent, a sudden re-union like the present had, for hearts such as ours, a more than ordinary charm. My mother's surprise

at seeing me was extreme; so was that of Miss Pyefinch, and far more vociferous. Had the resurrection from the "mools" been one on my part instead of my uncle's, her wonderment could scarcely have been greater.

My last communication had been dated from Belvoir Abbey, the day before our quitting it for Ryde, and both the ladies believed Amelia and myself to be at this moment ruralizing among the romantic glades of Shanklin. The penetrating Kitty, however, hit the right nail upon the head in a twinkling:—"He has seen Sir Oliver's decease in the papers, and is come home to comfort us!"

"But do not believe it—it is all nothing but nonsense," continued the poetess; "dear Sir Oliver is not dead, and never has been dead at all!"

I assured her that I gave implicit credit to her statement; and the honest joy which sparkled in her eye lost nothing of its intensity from the pleasing self-importance which we all derive from being the first to communicate positive and authentic intelligence.

When the *éclat* of my arrival had a little subsided, I was told a tale which, while it added fresh fuel to the scarcely-slumbering embers of my wrath, it was impossible to hear, as Miss Kitty and Jennings respectively delivered it, without feeling at least as much disposition to laughter as indignation.

The Liberal journal in which the obnoxious paragraph had appeared was of course one never seen at the Hall, where, as was the case with nine out of ten of the county families, all were of strong Conservative principles.

The first intimation which Sir Oliver had of his own decease was from a spruce-looking gentleman in a suit of sables, the sprightliness of whose manner, and the smug familiarity of whose address, comported but badly with the lugubrious character of his habiliments and the solemnity of his errand.

The baronet, after discussing his usual ample breakfast, was taking his morning's stroll about the grounds, and had reached the end of the avenue, where he stood leaning over the gate, in a picktooth attitude, and looking as if he thought he was thinking, when a smart, flashy,

"buggy," freighted with the dapper gentleman aforesaid, drew up before him.

"Hunderdown 'All, hold gentleman, eh? They told us first gate with bulls' heads on the *postes*."

"They were quite right," replied my uncle. "This is the road to the Hall; and what, pray, may be your pleasure there, sir?"

"Pleasure?—oh, no pleasure in life, hold boy—quite the con-*tra*-ry—no pleasure! hall bizzness — come to measure Sir Holiver for his coffin."

"The d—l you are?" said the astounded baronet; "and what rascal, pray, sent you here on such an errand?"

"Rascal?—Vot do you mean by that, you foul-mouthed old buffer?—I tell you, I belongs to Birdseye, Mapleton, and Co., the first hundertakers in Lunnun, and I comes to manage the old jockey's funeral;—so open the gate at vonce, and mind my mare,—she's an '*ell* of a kicker."

"So am I," said Sir Oliver, whose bristles were by this time thoroughly up; "and curse me if I don't kick you round the park if you dare put your foot into it. You make Sir Oliver's coffin, you son of a cinder-sifter!—Sir Oliver would see you d—d first."

"Oh, vot you thinks to do it yourself, I s'pose,—von of the hold boy's country *rums*, vot does carpenter's vork, and mends his barnses! It's no go, hold chap,—Sir Nicholas has given *us* the job, I tell ye, so you may as well mizzle at vonce."

"Sir who?" roared Sir Oliver.

"Vy, Sir Nicholas Bullwinkle, to be sure,—who else? The young barrownight as is. So open the gate vide, vill ye? and don't stand jawing there all day!"

It was lucky, perhaps, that a light open van drew up to the gate at this precise moment; the baronet was thoroughly exasperated, and an assault and battery upon the gentleman in the gig would, in all probability, have wound up the colloquy. As the metropolitan Jehu, however, had begun to back his kicking mare a little at the first sight of his opponent's manifestations of determined hostility, the humbler vehicle "cut in" before him.

"Be this the road to Underdown Hall, sir?" asked the lad who drove it, respectfully touching his hat.

"Yes, my man,—what have you got there?"

"Bullwinkle arms, sir," answered the driver;—and there, sure enough, did the astonished eyes of Sir Oliver behold, in the back of the cart, and bolt upright, a splendid escutcheon, within a black lozenge-shaped frame, some six feet by five in measurement, charged with the "golden fetterlocks in the azure field," and the "bloody hand" in a canton; the whole surmounted by the equestrian helmet, bearing a bull's head *proper*, horned and couped *Or*—his family coat in full and gorgeous blazonry—the only perceptible difference was, that in lieu of the motto, *Sans peur et sans reproche*, the single word *Resurgam* was conspicuous on the scroll, beneath which grinned horribly a death's head, flanked with a bat's wings, and having a couple of thigh-bones crossed in *saltier* under its chin.

At the very glimpse of an heraldic bearing, Sir Oliver had thrown open the gate, and the van had fairly entered the park before he caught sight of the ominous label, or fully comprehended the purpose to which the achievement was intended to be applied.

"Where are you carrying that thing? and what are you going to do with it?" he inquired, in an astonishment, which began to partake somewhat of alarm.

"Hang it over the hall door, sir," said the lad, civilly; "the men will be here directly."

"Why, who is dead, boy?"

"Sir Oliver Bullwinkle, Esquire.—Cheep—cheep!"—and the horse, in obedience to the well-known signal, trotted on with his light burden along the vista.

"Vot, didn't you know it, my covey?" quoth the foreman of Messrs. Birdseye, Mapleton, and Company, who had seized the opportunity to drive through the yawning portal himself. "Vy, lawk love 'ee, he's as dead as *'Arry the Heighth*, and 'as been these three days; vy, it's in hall the papers."

The baronet fell back, absolutely confounded, and the "'ell of a kicker" bore the "buggy" and its contents rapidly on towards the house.

My uncle's annoyances unfortunately did not terminate here; it is true that the united testimony of men and maids did at length, sorely to his amazement, convince the worthy agent of the Birdseye firm that he was in error, and "conglomerated" his faculties pretty considerably in his turn, while the achievement was sent back, not without blessings, to the place from which it came; but scarcely had Sir Oliver doffed his corduroys and "continuations," and was preparing to sit down to dinner in dove-coloured hose and clean linen, the latter adorned with a most magnificent redundancy of frill, when the sound of wheels was again heard approaching the mansion.

"Somebody come to dinner," quoth the baronet; "well, so much the better—glad of it—been plagued and bothered all day—shall like a chat,—Pyefinch, you're an infernal dummy,—may as well talk to the cat."

The captain raised his eyes, but seemed to think no answer necessary.

A carriage now stopped at the door, and the parlour windows being partly open, a voice was heard inquiring if "the baronet was at home?" The rattle of the steps, which followed, proved that the answer had been satisfactory, and that the unexpected guest had alighted.

"Two gentlemen to wait on you, Sir Oliver."

"Show 'em in here, Jennings,—glad to see them—lay more plates—who the d—l are they?"

"Mr. Jones and Mr. Simpson!" said the butler, announcing two respectable-looking personages in travelling dresses, who followed him into the room.

"Glad to see you, gentlemen;—walk in—glad to see you—come to dine, I hope?—be on table in a minute."

"You are extremely kind, sir—very much obliged—but really not at all prepared—did not expect the honour—a little business."

"Pooh! pooh! no ceremony here—d—n dress and all that—business?—very well—talk of business after dinner. My sister, gentlemen,—Miss Pyefinch—Captain Pyefinch—sister, Mr. Sampson and Mr. Thingummee—Jennings, dinner!"

"Yes, Sir Oliver," said the butler, as he retired and closed the door.

"Sir Oliver!" said Mr. Jones.

"Sir Oliver!!" said Mr. Simpson.

"Why yes, Sir Oliver," echoed my uncle—"Oliver Bullwinkle—who the d—l do you take me to be?"

"Sir Oliver Bullwinkle is no more,"—said Mr. Jones.

"Sir Oliver Bullwinkle died last Friday,"—said Mr. Simpson.

"It is an infernal lie!" said Sir Oliver. "Here, Jennings!—Pyefinch, ring the bell—do ring it as hard as you can. Why, Jennings, I say, keep back the dinner—throw those two plates out of the window. What the d—l do you two scoundrels mean by coming to insult me in my own house?"

"Your own house?" said Mr. Jones.

"Your own house?" screamed Mr. Simpson.

"My own house? ay, my own house—it is not yours, is it?—Who are ye?—What are ye come for?—the spoons? or the furniture?"

"Neither, sir? it is the books we want!"

"Oh, my books, do ye? Confound your impudence! Where do ye come from, I say?—who sent ye?—What do ye take me for?"

"A madman," whispered the alarmed Mr. Jones.

"Must be crazy!" gasped the terrified Mr. Simpson.

"Crazy?" cried Sir Oliver, "I crazy?—Hark ye, fellows, here stands old Oliver Bullwinkle, who, crazy or not, will never suffer himself to be called so on his own oak floor, by a couple of impudent vagabonds. Jennings!—Tom!—Wilkinson! here, throw these rascals into the horse-pond!"

"For Heaven's sake, Sir Oliver," interposed my mother; "here must be some mistake!"

"For Heaven's sake, Sir Oliver!" chimed in Miss Kitty.

The captain said nothing, but like the philosopher's parrot, doubtless he "thought the more."

"Sir Oliver," reiterated Mr. Jones, but in a much lower key than before, "I beg pardon—I beg a thousand pardons—I mean no offence—no offence in the world. —But is Sir Oliver Bullwinkle really alive?"

The captain nodded oracularly, for to him the appeal seemed to have been more particularly directed; and his sister exclaimed, "Alive?—why, don't you see he is?—I wonder how any one can ask so foolish a question!"

But Mrs. Stafford, who had heard enough of the events of the morning, and began to divine how matters stood, now interfered effectually.

She first exerted all her energies, and not without success, to pacify her brother's kindled rage, and to reassure the alarmed and astonished booksellers, for such the visitors were, who were beginning to entertain no slight apprehensions for their personal safety.

Their story was soon told:—Sir Nicholas Bullwinkle, as he had styled himself, being in want of a little ready money on succeeding to his title, had obtained one thousand pounds sterling from Messrs. Jones, Palimpsest, and Gingerby, of "the Row,"—"upon account." Mr. Jones, who had seen the library at Underdown, and knew its value, was to go down and select from its shelves such, and so many, volumes as he might approve to the above amount, while Mr. Simpson, of the firm of Sheepskin, Simpson, and Wiggleby, was to accompany him in the capacity of appraiser for, and on the part of, the vendor.

"What inconvenience and trouble has one 'mistake' in a newspaper occasioned! What a shame the editor was not more particular!"

So said Miss Pyefinch,—so said Mr. Simpson; Mr. Jones said nothing, but he looked unutterable things. At length he found words enough to touch upon the one subject which was evidently nearest his heart,—his thousand pounds.

"I hope, Sir Oliver, you will see the necessity of letting me have the books, or of returning, or at least guaranteeing the repayment of the money?"

"Who, I? What have I to do with it?—I pay Nick's debts? I answer for his swindling tricks? Not a stiver—never! Let him pay it himself—if he can't, so much the better! Catch him,—transport him,—hang him if you can,—all the better! shall be quite delighted——"

The head of the firm looked blank; but a significant

glance from my mother somewhat reassured him ; he had already witnessed the extent of her influence over her brother ; he was a man of the world, and knew that this was not the moment to press his suit ; so, like many a profound statesman before him, he yielded to expediency, and sat down with his friend Mr. Simpson to partake of the baronet's hospitality, which, now that harmony was restored, was again freely tendered them.

As the bottle circulated after dinner, Sir Oliver got into a better humour, but his guests failed, after all, in extracting from him anything like a " promise to pay ;" and, declining the offered accommodation of a bed at the Hall, the discomfited speculators in literature at length returned to sleep at the nearest post-town, Mr. Jones consoling himself with the reflection that he had, at all events, two strings to his bow, and that if Sir Oliver should continue obstinate, and he could once get Nicholas " within his vice," he should, in all human probability, extract from the father's fears what, it seemed, he was not to expect from his generosity.

Several minor miseries of a similar description had been inflicted on the family during the interval between the departure of Messrs. Jones and Simpson and my own arrival : the sexton had called to " know about tolling the bell," and the parish clerk, who, to his ecclesiastical functions, superadded the lay occupation of an operative bricklayer, had walked up " for orders" to enforce the rotten jaws of the tomb of all the Bullwinkles to open : these intrusions, however, had been for the most part confined to the servants' hall, and had never reached the baronet. Still there was another and a more formidable antagonist in ambuscade, who yet meditated a vigorous attack upon him.

This was no less a personage than my Cousin Nicholas himself, who, repulsed as he had been in open assault from before the fortress, had since not only effected a lodgment within its outworks, under the auspices, and with the co-operation of a part of its garrison (Jennings), but was actually preparing to carry the citadel itself by a *coup de main.*

Alas! like many an enterprising soldier before him, the general, renowned as he was in domestic strategetics, for once overrated his powers, miscalculated his time, and ruined his best chance by his own precipitancy.

Sir Oliver had been stoutly assailed in the morning by my mother, who made her approaches precisely on the side where his defences were weakest,—the honour of the family. The other debts of Nicholas he might deal with as he pleased, and leave him to suffer for his imprudence in contracting them; but this affair of the books looked so very like swindling, and obtaining money under false pretences, that it was questionable whether any twelve men in "the county of Middlesex to wit," could be found clear-sighted enough to distinguish the difference; she owned that she trembled for the result. Mr. Jones, at parting, had "right little said," but there was a something ominous in his very silence, and his eye had carried Newgate in its every glance. Jennings, too, had given her a hint that one or two odd-looking people had since been seen about the grounds.

Gracious powers! a Bullwinkle at the Old Bailey! Shade of the immortal Roger!—that way madness lay! Open earth first, and swallow Underdown and all it contained!

Though not so "wedded to the pedigree" as her brother, Mrs. Stafford was yet sufficiently imbued with the honest pride that exults in descending from a lineage of which "all the sons were honourable, and all the daughters virtuous:" she would have done much, and borne much, to prevent a stain upon the family, which no subsequent effort could obliterate. She thought, too, that deserving as my cousin was of punishment, it should yet stop short of that excess of severity which might drive him to despair. She implored her brother to pause, to consider the consequences which must follow the apprehension of the heir of the house on such a charge; the disgrace which, however unmerited, would infallibly attach to all connected with him. She pressed him for her own sake, for all our sakes, to replace the sum, and declared that, should the raising it on the instant be in the

slightest degree inconvenient to him, she would joyfully advance the money herself.

"No, no; that's not it," returned the baronet, a little staggered by the force of her representations; "that's not it. Curse the money! there is enough of it in that *bureau* at this moment to pay the trumpery sum twice over. It is not that; but to be choused, and bamboozled, and humbugged. Sell the books! Never—I'll never forgive him—no, if he were kneeling now at my feet——"

And there he was,—there,—the most contrite, the most supplicatory of mankind in look and action,—knelt my Cousin Nicholas! his arms crossed upon his breast, and his eyes turned up with the expression of a male Magdalen,—barring the squint.

Under the cover of a tall Indian screen, covered with little gold men in little gold funnel-shaped hats, with long gold pigtails, and longer gold fishing-rods, standing on short gold bridges, overtopped by tall gold pagodas, upon a ground whose polished japan would have put Day and Martin to open shame; by favour of such a screen placed just within the door of his "Snuggery," for the purpose of preventing the draughts of heaven from visiting the baronet's limbs too roughly, had Mr. Bullwinkle followed my mother unperceived into the little room where his father usually transacted his "Justice business," and kept his papers; from the depth of this ambuscade in silence had he witnessed the progress of her intercession.

The moment, he thought, was at length arrived when a demonstration on his own part might effectually sustain the attack of his auxiliary.

My Cousin Nicholas was never more mistaken in his life.

The very sight of him seemed at once to bring back the ebbing ire of Sir Oliver in tremendous refluence; all his newly-acquired mildness was dissipated in an instant, and, to use the language of the present day, "the reaction" was complete.

Nicholas was compelled to scud before the storm under bare poles. He effected his retreat, indeed, but not before his father had, in the exuberance of his wrath,

launched at him an *anathema* which he vowed he would never revoke but on the death-bed of one of them.

O cæca mens hominum!—little did he then think how soon,—how very soon,—he would have given worlds to recall it! but let me not anticipate.

CHAPTER XXIV.

——— Last scene of all,
Which ends this strange eventful history.
SHAKSPEARE.

A LATITAT.—CONVERSATION AND EXPLANATION.—THE MIDNIGHT HOUR.—THE MORE HASTE THE LESS SPEED.—THE ECLAIRCISSEMENT.—THE DENOUEMENT.—THE FALL OF THE LEAF.—THE FALL OF THE CURTAIN.

ONCE more ensconced among the "Curiosities of his Museum," in the back attic, my Cousin Nicholas again lay *perdu*, disheartened, but not subdued, when a sight which he beheld from its solitary window rendered him for the moment very little inclined to quit the safe retreat afforded him by his asylum: this was the view of a travelling-carriage and four, followed by out-riders in the Manningham liveries, and advancing rapidly along the road to the Hall.

My cousin was just now in no humour to see company, especially when awkward recognitions might by possibility take place. He resolved to keep close in his garret, and not "be at home to anybody."

Nor were his conjectures without foundation. The vehicle which he beheld contained the Viscount and Fortescue, who, like myself, were brought to Underdown by the fabricated paragraph.

Astonished at having received no intelligence of so melancholy an event from his sister-in-law, and apprehensive as to the cause of her silence, Lord Manningham had come in person to condole with, and offer her his best attentions; but the "jolly good hoax" had by this time

got wind through the medium of the Jones and Birdseye gentry, and his lordship had been undeceived as to the baronet's supposed decease while changing horses at the last stage.

His arrival, however, was by no means *mal-à-propos;* on the contrary, it appeared to act like oil upon the billows of my uncle's wrath, and soothed him once more into something resembling a calm, though the ground-swell still continued to manifest itself for some time after. But Sir Oliver had a great respect for his noble connection, and if Fortescue had never ranked very high in his good graces, from the time of his "winging" my unfortunate self, still his quiet and reserved habits had prevented their coming much into contact, or even into collision; their presence had, in consequence, a very sedative effect.

It will not be necessary to take my readers again over the same ground which we have so recently travelled together, or to speak of the astonishment of the new comers at the impudence of the forgery, their conjectures as to its author and his motives, or their congratulations on its ascertained falsehood; though all these topics were, naturally enough, brought under revision by the party, both before and after dinner. I hasten on to the narration of an event, which changed in one moment the whole current of our thoughts, and produced a sensation, compared with which all our previous agitation and excitement might be called tranquillity.

The evening had closed in; my mother and Miss Pyefinch had long since sought their pillows, and I myself was preparing to retire for the night. On ascending the great staircase I encountered Fortescue, who had preceded me by a few minutes. He was evidently in waiting for me, and now made a quiet signal, in obedience to which I followed him in silence to the apartment prepared for his reception; it was a room on the first floor, and immediately over that which my uncle used to call his "Snuggery," the same in which the last interview between him and my Cousin Nicholas has been recorded to have taken place.

We had left Sir Oliver and Lord Manningham deeply engaged in conversation in the Cedar parlour, which was on the other side of the house, and the door leading to which opened from the farther extremity of the Hall.

The baronet, when I quitted the room, was a little elevated;—either, in what he would consider the due discharge of his duties as a host, he had somewhat exceeded his customary potations, or the excitement which he had previously undergone in the course of the morning had given additional effect to his usual *quantum*. I know not how it happened, but it was very evident that his vivacity was increasing in exact proportion to the drowsiness of which his visitor began to exhibit no equivocal symptoms —symptoms which Sir Oliver, who had now got fairly astride upon his favourite hobby-horse, "the Family of the Bullwinkles," could not, and would not, understand.

The baronet was riding *au grand galop*—he had reached as far as Sir Geoffrey Bullwinkle, who was killed fighting *ex parte regis* at the fatal battle of Marston Moor, before his noble auditor was fairly asleep; and as his native politeness had induced the latter to listen,—or seem to listen,—as long as nature could be persuaded to countenance the venial hypocrisy, the *raconteur* did not perceive the real condition of his patient till just upon the stroke of midnight.

Fortescue and myself meanwhile were engaged in a discussion, the *sombre* character of which suited well with "the dead hour of night" at which it was carried on.

He was looking much paler and thinner than when I had last seen him; his melancholy seemed more intense; and from the involuntary twitching of the muscles about his mouth, his whole nervous system appeared to be more thoroughly shaken.

I adverted, in a tone of sympathy, to the fact,—he at once admitted it, and then, for the first time, I heard from his own lips an avowal of that mysterious communion which, as he was fully persuaded, continued still to exist between his own spirit and that of his departed mistress, —an intercourse which he pronounced to be at once the charm and the bane of his existence.

That he had been long since warned of some indefinite danger threatening Amelia,—that he had been incited at first to protect, and afterwards to avenge her,—that, under this overpowering influence, he had found all the ties of gratitude and humanity too weak to restrain him from his destined task—all this he now solemnly declared to me, and that, too, with a degree of earnestness which left no doubt of his own absolute conviction of the reality of his visitation.

In vain did I endeavour to prove to him his delusion; in vain did I appeal to his reason, and even urge the fact of his having been so entirely mistaken in the object of his vengeance, as an irresistible argument of the fallacy of his impression—it staggered him, it is true, but it did not convince him.

"No, Charles," he replied, "your conclusion is a hasty one. Since the unconscious error, which was fraught with so much mischief to yourself, I have been more ill at ease than ever; an inward feeling seems constantly to harass and upbraid me, not more for what I have done than for what I have left unperformed; there seems to be a deed reserved for me—a something yet to be executed,—what I know not,—ere the importunate demands of destiny will be satisfied, and I may rest in peace.

"This it is which blanches my cheek and unnerves my frame. I am ever in a state of vague and unnatural excitement,—anxious I know not why,—apprehensive of I know not what: this it is——"

He paused—for a slight sound like that of a stealthy footstep seemed at this moment to proceed from the corridor.

Not desiring an eavesdropper, I rose, and opened the door, but there was no one to be seen,—all was still; and I was about to close it again, when the great clock in the hall struck One!

Immediately after, the measured tread of Lord Manningham was heard ascending, as his servant showed him to his chamber. I listened in vain for that of my uncle; he did not follow, but, as I concluded, remained still below. The noise of a closing door or two was heard, and all was again silent.

We renewed our conversation, and I my arguments and persuasions.

Half an hour had perhaps elapsed, and our candles were beginning to exhibit a most disproportionate length of wick, when the ears of both of us were at once invaded by a sound proceeding from the room immediately beneath.

It was a protracted, harsh, and grating noise, as if produced by a saw or file. It ceased for a few moments, and then again commenced.

Scarcely had we time to interchange a word on the subject, when its character was altered. There was a pause—a scuffle—a chair fell—then we heard the half-smothered accents of a stifled voice; it sounded like the cry of "murder!"

I rushed to the door; Fortescue, who had just before thrown off his coat, seized the travelling pistols which he had left undischarged upon the toilet, and followed in his shirt sleeves.

As I reached the head of the staircase, I made "a cannon" between Miss Pyefinch, issuing from her bed-room in her night-gear, and the banisters,—we rolled down to the first landing-place most lovingly together,—Fortescue sprang over our revolving bodies, and reached the hall below; in an instant after, the crash of a door burst open,—the sound of a pistol-shot,—a heavy fall—spoke of mischief—of injury—of death!

I recovered my feet in haste, and, without one word of apology to my terrified companion, rushed downwards to the hall.

Years have since rolled by, but never have I forgotten—never can I forget the scene which met my eyes.

The broad light of an autumnal moon shone full into the little chamber which I have been describing, unchecked even by the window, which was open.

In the door-way, and just within the entrance, two figures were distinctly visible, the one leaning on the other for support; they were my Uncle Oliver and Fortescue: more in the interior, and towards the centre of the apartment, lay prostrate a form, which from the uncertainty of

the light, there intercepted by a projecting cornice, might, or might not, be that of a human being.

My candle had been extinguished in my fall, Fortescue's had been left above; I stumbled over a third which had been stricken from the hand that bore it; but the household was by this time alarmed,—servants were flocking in from every quarter, and Lord Manningham himself, in his *robe de chambre*, appeared upon the scene of action.

My Uncle Oliver was still clinging, with a grasp convulsively tenacious, to the stalwart frame of Fortescue, who supported him as the oak supports the ivy. On the ground, with the head towards their feet and the face to the floor, lay, indeed, the body of a man, still and motionless, while a thick but narrow line of the deepest crimson, issuing from beneath the forehead, stagnated at the distance of a yard, in a broad and curling pool, on the surface of the stone-coloured carpet!

The lights and the company multiplied; Sir Oliver was the first object of attention to all; he was uninjured, save by a slight wound on the back of one of his hands, but breathless, and with his dress disordered and torn, as from a violent struggle.

The prostrate form was next examined; it was raised from the ground, and, as the light flashed upon the inanimate and blood-stained features, Lord Manningham exclaimed—"By Heaven! the pretended Stafford!"—and I, "My Cousin Nicholas!"

"Then it is done! and my weird is accomplished!" cried Fortescue, as, extricating himself from my uncle's grasp, he staggered back into the hall, and sank in all the feebleness of infancy upon a chair,—a discharged pistol fell from his hand as he spoke.

* * * * *

Let me draw a veil over this horrible event, the earlier particulars of which could never be clearly ascertained, for poor Uncle Oliver, who alone could have elucidated the whole, never recovered the shock, but sank from that fatal moment into childish imbecility.

From Fortescue, indeed, we gathered, in after-days, that, guided by the sounds from within, he had forced open the

door with his foot ; that he had seen Sir Oliver, exhausted, upon his knees, and a ruffian, with one hand twisted in my uncle's cravat, while the other grasped a weapon that glittered in the moonbeam, and seemed in the very act of descending on his unprotected head ;—a moment longer, and it would have been too late : he fired, and the rescued victim staggered into his embrace, as the assassin fell without a groan—the ball had penetrated his brain.

A sharp and heavy chisel, found on the spot from which the corpse had been raised, corroborated this account, while marks of violence, corresponding with the instrument, which appeared upon the forced lock of the *bureau*, bespoke the main—let us hope the only—purpose for which it had been introduced.

Whether Sir Oliver, whose vigils, as we have seen, had been prolonged beyond his wont, had been alarmed by the noise produced in attempting his escritoir, or whether he had taken it into his head to pay a casual visit to his "Snuggery" before retiring to bed, and there encountered the intruder, cannot be known ;—that he had detected him in the act of breaking into his depository was clear : it was also evident that a personal conflict—let us hope in mutual ignorance of their relative situations —had taken place between the parties.

That Nicholas had overheard his father's avowal, made to my mother, concerning the sums in the escritoir, was almost certain ; that the apparent hopelessness of any farther appeal to his exasperated father at present, the pursuit of the officers, and, above all, the arrival of Lord Manningham, who would be sure to recognize him if seen,—that all these circumstances combined to make him desperate, was most probable.

In all likelihood, finding it impossible to remain long undetected in his present retreat, he had determined on possessing himself of the property which he had heard was in the *bureau*, and on putting into execution his previously avowed design of retiring for a while to the Continent, where the sums he had collected, and that which he thus expected to secure, would support him till cir-

cumstances might render his return to England safe and advisable. The fatal result of his unprincipled attempt we have already seen.

* * * * *

But little of this eventful history remains to be told; for the satisfaction, however, of those who have travelled thus far with me through the chameleon life of my unfortunate cousin, and who may condescend to take an interest in the fortunes of those associated with him, I may be permitted to state that my poor uncle Sir Oliver did not survive the loss of his son many months, and never awoke to a full consciousness of his misfortune. He wasted gradually away, and, without any decided disease to which Drench could give a name, became as a blighted and a withered tree. He ate the food set before him; but, as Miss Pyefinch often observed, "it seemed to do him no sort of good." He seldom spoke, and still more rarely quitted his chamber; there were times, however, when, from his inquiring glances, we fancied that he partially recognized those about him; but he never confirmed that opinion by words.

It was in the twilight of an autumnal evening, in the course of the following year, that the gamekeeper's son, a boy of fourteen, had, in the temporary absence of the family, taken his father's gun, attracted by a flight of pigeon-fieldfares, which had alighted among the berries of the shrubbery;—a projecting buttress of the building offered him concealment, and from beneath its covert he made his shot. Sir Oliver, now quite enfeebled and unconscious, as usual, of all about him, was in a room above.

At the report of the piece he sprang from his seat with a vigour which to his attendants seemed little less than miraculous, and, with a shriek that long after rang in their ears, exclaimed,—"Hold! Hold your hand, I say! —don't fire!—'tis my boy—'tis Nicholas!"

A servant caught him as he was falling, and conveyed him to a couch; but his weary course was ended,—his heart-strings had given way,—Sir Oliver Bullwinkle was dead!

Fortescue quitted England, as he declared, for ever,

soon after the fatal catastrophe in which he had taken so unfortunate a share. The accident of the real insulter of Amelia having fallen by his hand, only the more strongly confirmed him in his melancholy delusion.

Without assuming the shape of decided insanity, his eccentricities became more and more apparent. We have often heard from him during his wanderings, which have extended over no inconsiderable portion of the habitable globe. Our last accounts were from India, and spoke of ill-health and increasing debility. "He had returned," he said, "to Hindostan, in obedience to a summons from Matilda, to lay his bones beside those of his early love."

Captain Pyefinch is no more: he did not long survive the last of the Bullwinkles. For the first time in his life, perhaps, a tear was seen to trickle down his cheek as he beheld his old friend and companion consigned to the "narrow house;" and from that moment, though little alteration was to be perceived in his ever-placid demeanour, yet he too seemed to grow thinner and thinner: his nose became as sharp as a pen, and he looked as if he had no longer anybody to hold his tongue to.

His passing out of the world was, like the whole tenor of his existence in it, quiet and tranquil. One morning he did not come down to breakfast; more marvellous still, he was absent from the dinner-table. Drench repaired to his bedside, felt his pulse, looked at his tongue, and asked him "How he found himself?" The patient laid his hand upon his heart, looked wistfully in the doctor's face, and said, "Queer!" "What was the matter with him? What were his symptoms?" "Un-com—fort—a—ble," whispered the poor captain—and expired! Drench is decidedly of opinion that he died of suffocation produced by the length of the polysyllable.

But Miss Kitty is yet alive, and likely to live—still devoted to the worship of the muses, and youthful as ever—save that she has grown a little deaf.

Without abandoning the service of Polyhymnia, she has been coquetting much of late with her severer sister, who presides over Political Economy. She has become in consequence more thoroughly ingrained than even of yore

with the prevailing tint that marks what the most eloquent and impassioned auctioneer of this world—or of any other—once denominated "the Azure, Blue, Cærulean vault of Heaven."

For much of her deepened dye, she is indebted to the celebrated Dr. Olinthus Broadback, of the "Grand National Institute of Intellectual Chimney-sweepers."

This erudite professor, in one of his itinerant excursions, undertaken for the purpose of enlightening every provincial *ignoramus*, happened to include Underdown in his circle, and to deliver, in the great room at the Saracen's Head, a series of lectures, at the trifling charge of twopence each person.

In the course of these interesting disquisitions, the philosopher demonstrated incontestably that the sun is *not* a soot-bag, nor the moon made of cream-cheese; that any opposite opinions which may have prevailed are "vulgar errors," originally introduced by the late Lord Londonderry, and since countenanced by Sir Robert Peel and "the Tories," for the mere purpose of "trampling" on the "useful classes."

Miss Pyefinch was first the attentive and delighted auditor, and then the friend and correspondent of this gifted individual. Together did they walk hand-in-hand through the labyrinths of statistical lore. To her did he communicate his wonderful discoveries in all the vast variety of "inities" and "ologies"—to him did she submit her album. Nay, it has been positively asserted that the last entry in that splendid collection of fugitive poetry is from the doctor's own inspired pen. If Fame speaks truth in this respect, the effusion is the more valuable as being the only accredited specimen of his muse; for, with all his unrivalled talents, the "Gods have not made him poetical." It is some vague perception of this kind, perhaps, which may have given birth to his concluding stanza, which runs thus :—

> "Hinch 'em pinch 'em, barley-straw!
> Nineteen pinches is the law!—
> Pinch not now,—but pinch me then,—
> Pinch me when I rhyme again!"

A rumour has gone forth that this platonic affection is likely to end like many other platonic affections, in warmer sympathies, and to "eventuate," as the doctor calls it, in a matrimonial connection.

The only objection to this story is, that in principle the lady is avowedly become a decided Malthusian, speaks with horror of "thoughtless procreation," and looks forward with alarm to no very distant period when the world shall be destroyed by its human vermin, as a ripe Stilton cheese is devoured by its own mites.

She has discarded her flaxen ringlets, laughs at fashion, and is learning to smoke cigars.

In her last "Essay on Propagation," she laid it down as an axiom that those parts of the globe where polygamy prevails are the most thinly inhabited, and thence infers that the only way to prevent excess of population is for every man to have half a dozen wives at once. She is said to be much in the confidence of a certain minister of state, and is grievously suspected by the Bishop of Exeter to have had a hand in framing sundry questionable clauses in the new "Poor-law Bill," which are thought to press hard on the comforts of those who "love not wisely, but too well." I was told at the club, last Wednesday, that she is now projecting a voyage to the West Indies, for the purpose of watching the progress of procreation among the emancipated negroes.

The Reverend Josiah Pozzlethwayte has lately attained his grand climacteric. His academical labours came to an abrupt termination some few years since, by the falling in of a valuable college living in a midland county, and he is now the respected incumbent of Slopton Boozle, with the vicarage of Soakingham annexed. He is happy in the possession of a comfortable income, a snug parsonage, and a housekeeper who delighteth in cherry-coloured ribbons.

Though no longer resident, Mr. Pozzlethwayte is a frequent visitor at Oxford, and at the last Installation was honoured by the especial notice of his Grace the Duke of Wellington himself, that illustrous chancellor condescending to inquire, with much seeming earnestness

and characteristic rapidity, "Inglis, who is that d—d odd-looking fellow in the wig?"

So glorious a close to his long and laborious career is justly considered a subject of great congratulation by his friends.

Drench, though somewhat fallen into the "sear and yellow leaf," is still, to use his own language, "as hearty as a buck," thanks to an excellent constitution, and never taking his own medicines. The end of his pigtail, to be sure, is become white, and contrasts well with the sable shalloon that unites it to his *occiput;* but then, *per contra*, his nose is redder than ever, and no man in all Underdown has a keener relish for his glass of old port and his rubber of long whist.

He has long since retired from the active duties of his profession, and having consigned his *hiera picra* to a younger hand, enjoys his *otium cum dignitate* on an adequate independence, honourably acquired.

Some months before his final resolution to "throw physic to the dogs," a sharp attack of bile confined him to his room, and thirteen disbanded army surgeons came down on the outside of the "Tally-ho," and settled themselves at Underdown, in anticipation of a vacancy; but the Doctor's *stamina* carried him through, and soon after his recovery he seized an opportunity of disposing of his practice to an eminent Irish professor of the healing art, inventor and sole proprietor of the "Reanimating Mineral Pill."

The fame of this celebrated *panacea* is now great in Underdown and its vicinity, for though two or three perverse verdicts, under "crowner's quest law," have recently cast a shade of suspicion on its virtues with the incredulous, yet, as its learned proprietor very classically observes,—

"Magnum sunt veritatem et prævalebit."

Among the better disposed and more enlightened, a single bushel of these invaluable holuses is still considered as generally sufficient for the cure of all human complaints.

My noble and gallant father-in-law is receiving, in a

higher and happier state of existence, the reward of a life passed here in the faithful and active discharge of every duty which they who are placed by Providence in exalted stations owe to their country and to mankind. A splendid funeral, attended by the magnates of the land, and a monument in Westminster Abbey, erected at the public expense, were the tribute paid by his country's gratitude to his public merits. Sorrow unfeigned, and affectionate regret, were the homage, as genuine, if less ostentatious, rendered, by a large social circle, to his private virtues.

At his decease, the family honours of course devolved upon myself. Lady Manningham, in whom my fondest hopes have found their accomplishment, has presented me with five good-looking children, who, if not absolutely "little angels," as my friend Kitty would once have called them, are well-formed, healthy, and robust.

When not detained in London by my parliamentary duties, we usually pass our time alternately at the Abbey and the Hall, which latter, together with the surrounding domain, became my property by succession, and has since been settled as the appanage of my second son, Oliver Stafford.

There are times when, we have the authority of one who was himself a statesman for believing, "the post of honour is a private station;" and though I never have shrunk, nor ever shall shrink, from doing what I consider my duty towards the country which has given me birth, I have little encouragement, and less inclination, at present to embark upon the stormy sea of politics. As a husband, a father, and a resident landlord, I have full and pleasing occupation for my time. My children are educated under my own eye and that of their excellent mother, by a pious and learned divine of our venerable church, who officiates also as my chaplain. They are brought up in the fear of God and the love of their fellow-creatures; and when we see, as we sometimes do see, in the exuberant liveliness of their animal spirits, any tendency to extravagant and practical jokes, or to self-indulgence at the expense of others, we fail not to inculcate upon them the too lightly regarded axiom, that IMPUDENCE IS NOT HUMOUR, NOR MISCHIEF

WIT;—THAT LEVITY, IF UNCHECKED BY PRINCIPLE, MAY DEGENERATE INTO VICE, AND TERMINATE IN CRIME.

It is our constant aim not to throw unnecessarily a damp upon the light and buoyant spirit of youthful hilarity, but to confine that spirit within the limits set by reason and religion; to check all outrageous and injurious follies, and to

"Warn the frolic and instruct the gay,"

by setting before them in distinct, if sombre colours, the melancholy

END OF MY COUSIN NICHOLAS.

THE TRANCE.

A SINGULAR PASSAGE IN THE LIFE OF THE LATE HENRY HARRIS, DOCTOR IN DIVINITY.

AS RELATED BY THE REV. JASPER INGOLDSBY, M.A., HIS FRIEND AND EXECUTOR.

In order that the extraordinary circumstance which I am about to relate may meet with the credit it deserves, I think it necessary to premise, that my reverend friend, among whose papers I find it recorded, was, in his life-time, ever esteemed as a man of good plain understanding, strict veracity, and unimpeached morals—by no means of a nervous temperament, or one likely to attach undue weight to any occurrence out of the common course of events, merely because his reflections might not, at the moment, afford him a ready solution of its difficulties.

On the truth of his narrative, as far as he was personally concerned, no one who knew him would hesitate to place the most implicit reliance. His history is briefly this :—He had married early in life, and was a widower at the age of thirty-nine, with an only daughter, who had then arrived at puberty, and was just married to a near connection of our own family. The sudden death of her husband, occasioned by a fall from his horse, only three days after her confinement, was abruptly communicated to Mrs. S—— by a thoughtless girl, who saw her master brought lifeless into the house, and, with all that inexplicable anxiety to be the first to tell bad news, so common among the lower orders, rushed at once into the sick-

room with her intelligence. The shock was too severe; and, though the young widow survived the fatal event several months, yet she gradually sunk under the blow, and expired, leaving a boy, not a twelvemonth old, to the care of his maternal grandfather.

My poor friend was sadly shaken by this melancholy catastrophe; time, however, and a strong religious feeling, succeeded at length in moderating the poignancy of his grief—a consummation much advanced by his infant charge, who now succeeded, as it were by inheritance, to the place in his affections left vacant by his daughter's decease. Frederick S—— grew up to be a fine lad; his person and features were decidedly handsome; still there was, as I remember, an unpleasant expression in his countenance, and an air of reserve, attributed, by the few persons who called occasionally at the vicarage, to the retired life led by his grandfather, and the little opportunity he had, in consequence, of mixing in the society of his equals in age and intellect. Brought up entirely at home, his progress in the common branches of education was, without any great display of precocity, rather in advance of the generality of boys of his own standing; partly owing, perhaps, to the turn which even his amusements took from the first. His sole associate was the son of the village apothecary, a boy about two years older than himself, whose father, being really clever in his profession, and a good operative chemist, had constructed for himself a small laboratory, in which, as he was fond of children, the two boys spent a great portion of their leisure time, witnessing many of those little experiments so attractive to youth, and in time aspiring to imitate what they admired.

In such society, it is not surprising that Frederick S—— should imbibe a strong taste for the sciences which formed his principal amusement; or that, when, in process of time, it became necessary to choose his walk in life, a profession so intimately connected with his favourite pursuit as that of medicine, should be eagerly selected. No opposition was offered by my friend, who, knowing that the greater part of his own income would expire with his

life, and that the remainder would prove an insufficient resource to his grandchild, was only anxious that he should follow such a path as would secure him that moderate and respectable competency which is, perhaps, more conducive to real happiness than a more elevated or wealthy station. Frederick was, accordingly, at the proper age, matriculated at Oxford, with the view of studying the higher branches of medicine, a few months after his friend, John W——, had proceeded to Leyden, for the purpose of making himself acquainted with the practice of surgery in the hospitals and lecture-rooms attached to that university. The boyish intimacy of their younger days did not, as is frequently the case, yield to separation; on the contrary, a close correspondence was kept up between them. Dr. Harris was even prevailed upon to allow Frederick to take a trip to Holland to see his friend; and John returned the visit to Frederick at Oxford.

Satisfactory as, for some time, were the accounts of the general course of Frederick S——'s studies, by degrees rumours of a less pleasant nature reached the ears of some of his friends: to the vicarage, however, I have reason to believe they never penetrated. The good old Doctor was too well beloved in the parish for any one voluntarily to give him pain; and, after all, nothing beyond whispers and surmises had reached X——, when the worthy vicar was surprised on a sudden by a request from his grandchild that he might be permitted to take his name off the books of the university, and proceed to finish his education in conjunction with his friend W—— at Leyden. Such a proposal, made, too, at a time when the period for his graduating could not be far distant, both surprised and grieved the Doctor; he combated the design with more perseverance than he had ever been known to exert in opposition to any declared wish of his darling boy before, but, as usual, gave way when more strongly pressed, from sheer inability to persist in a refusal which seemed to give so much pain to Frederick, especially when the latter, with more energy than was quite becoming their relative situations, expressed his

positive determination of not returning to Oxford, whatever might be the result of his grandfather's decision. My friend, his mind perhaps a little weakened by a short but severe nervous attack, which he had scarcely recovered from, at length yielded a reluctant consent, and Frederick quitted England.

It was not till some months had elapsed after his departure, that I had reason to suspect that the eager desire of availing himself of opportunities for study abroad, not afforded him at home, was not the sole, or even the principal reason, which had drawn Frederick so abruptly from his *Alma Mater*. A chance visit to the university, and a conversation with a senior fellow belonging to his late college, convinced me of this; still I found it impossible to extract from the latter the precise nature of his offence. That he had given way to most culpable indulgences, I had before heard hinted; and when I recollected how he had been at once launched from a state of what might be well called seclusion, into a world where so many enticements were lying in wait to allure, with liberty, example, everything to tempt him from the straight road, regret, I frankly own, was more the predominant feeling in my mind than either surprise or condemnation. But here was evidently something more than mere ordinary excess—some act of profligacy, perhaps of a deeper stain, which had induced his superiors, who at first had been loud in his praises, to desire him to withdraw himself quietly, but for ever; and such an intimation, I found, had, in fact, been conveyed to him from an authority which it was impossible to resist. Seeing that my informant was determined not to be explicit, I did not press for a disclosure, which, if made, would, in all probability, only have given me pain, and that the rather, as my old friend the Doctor had recently obtained a valuable living from Lord M——, only a few miles distant from the market-town in which I resided, where he now was, amusing himself in putting his grounds into order, ornamenting his house, and getting everything ready against his grandson's expected visit in the following autumn. October came, and with it came Frederick. He rode over

more than once to see me, sometimes accompanied by the Doctor, between whom and myself the recent loss of my daughter Louisa had drawn the chords of sympathy still closer.

More than two years had flown on in this way, in which Frederick S—— had as many times made temporary visits to his native country. The time was fast approaching when he was expected to return, and finally take up his residence in England, when the sudden illness of my wife's father obliged us to take a journey into Lancashire, my old friend, who had himself a curate, kindly offering to fix his quarters at my parsonage, and superintend the concerns of my parish till my return. Alas! when I saw him next he was on the bed of death!

My absence was necessarily prolonged much beyond what I had anticipated. A letter, with a foreign postmark, had, as I afterwards found, been brought over from his own house to my venerable substitute in the interval, and, barely giving himself time to transfer the charge he had undertaken to a neighbouring clergyman, he had hurried off at once to Leyden. His arrival there was, however, too late. Frederick *was dead!*—killed in a duel, occasioned, it was said, by no ordinary provocation on his part, although the flight of his antagonist had added to the mystery which enveloped its origin. The long journey, its melancholy termination, and the complete overthrow of all my poor friend's earthly hopes, were too much for him. He appeared too,—as I was informed by the proprietor of the house in which I found him, when his summons at length had brought me to his bed-side,—to have received some sudden and unaccountable shock, which even the death of his grandson was inadequate to explain. There was, indeed, a wildness in his fast-glazing eye, which mingled strangely with the glance of satisfaction thrown upon me as he pressed my hand. He endeavoured to raise himself, and would have spoken, but fell back in the effort, and closed his eyes for ever. I buried him there, by the side of the object of his more than parental affection, in a foreign land.

It is from the papers that I discovered in his travelling-case that I submit the following extracts, without, however, presuming to advance an opinion on the strange circumstances which they detail, or even as to the connection which some may fancy they discover between different parts of them.

The first was evidently written at my own house, and bears date August the 15th, 18—, about three weeks after my own departure for Preston.

It begins thus :—

"TUESDAY, AUGUST 15.—Poor girl! I forget who it is that says, 'the real ills of life are light in comparison with fancied evils;' and certainly the scene I have just witnessed goes some way towards establishing the truth of the hypothesis. Among the afflictions which flesh is heir to, a diseased imagination is far from being the lightest, even when considered separately, and without taking into the account those bodily pains and sufferings which—so close is the connection between mind and matter—are but too frequently attendant upon any disorder of the fancy. Seldom has my interest been more powerfully excited than by poor Mary Graham. Her age, her appearance, her pale, melancholy features, the very contour of her countenance, all conspired to remind me, but too forcibly, of one who, waking or sleeping, is never long absent from my thoughts;—but enough of this.

"A fine morning had succeeded one of the most tempestuous nights I ever remember, and I was just sitting down to a substantial breakfast, which the care of my friend Ingoldsby's housekeeper, kind-hearted Mrs. Wilson, had prepared for me, when I was interrupted by a summons to the sick-bed of a young parishioner whom I had frequently seen in my walks, and had remarked for the regularity of her attendance at Divine worship. Mary Graham is the elder of two daughters residing with their mother, the widow of an attorney, who, dying suddenly in the prime of life, left his family but slenderly provided for. A strict, though not parsimonious economy, has, however, enabled them to live with an appearance of

respectability and comfort; and from the personal attractions which both the girls possess, their mother is evidently not without hopes of seeing one, at least, of them advantageously settled in life. As far as poor Mary is concerned, I fear she is doomed to inevitable disappointment, as I am much mistaken if consumption has not laid its wasting finger upon her; while this last recurrence, of what I cannot but believe to be a most formidable epileptic attack, threatens to shake out, with even added velocity, the little sand that may yet remain within the hour-glass of time. Her very delusion, too, is of such a nature as, by adding to bodily illness the agitation of superstitious terror, can scarcely fail to accelerate the catastrophe which I think I see fast approaching.

"Before I was introduced into the sick-room, her sister, who had been watching my arrival from the window, took me into their little parlour, and, after the usual civilities, began to prepare me for the visit I was about to pay. Her countenance was marked at once with trouble and alarm, and in a low tone of voice, which some internal emotion, rather than the fear of disturbing the invalid in a distant room, had subdued almost to a whisper, informed me that my presence was become necessary, not more as a clergyman than a magistrate; that the disorder with which her sister had, during the night, been so suddenly and unaccountably seized, was one of no common kind, but attended with circumstances which, coupled with the declarations of the sufferer, took it out of all ordinary calculations, and, to use her own expression, that 'malice was at the bottom of it.'

"Naturally supposing that these insinuations were intended to intimate the partaking of some deleterious substance on the part of the invalid, I inquired what reason she had for imagining, in the first place, that anything of a poisonous nature had been administered at all; and, secondly, what possible incitement any human being could have for the perpetration of so foul a deed towards so innocent and unoffending an individual? Her answer considerably relieved the apprehensions I had begun to entertain lest the poor girl should, from some

unknown cause, have herself been attempting to rush uncalled into the presence of her Creator; at the same time, it surprised me not a little by its apparent want of rationality and common sense. She had no reason to believe, she said, that her sister had taken poison, or that any attempt upon her life had been made, or was perhaps contemplated; but that 'still malice was at work,'—the malice of villains or fiends, or of both combined; that no causes purely natural would suffice to account for the state in which her sister had been now twice placed, or for the dreadful sufferings she had undergone while in that state; and that she was determined the whole affair should undergo a thorough investigation. Seeing that the poor girl was now herself labouring under a great degree of excitement, I did not think it necessary to enter at that moment into a discussion upon the absurdity of her opinion, but applied myself to the tranquillizing her mind by assurances of a proper inquiry, and then drew her attention to the symptoms of the indisposition, and the way in which it had first made its appearance.

"The violence of the storm last night had, I found, induced the whole family to sit up far beyond their usual hour, till, wearied out at length, and, as their mother observed, 'tired of burning fire and candle to no purpose,' they retired to their several chambers.

"The sisters occupied the same room; Elizabeth was already at their humble toilet, and had commenced the arrangement of her hair for the night, when her attention was at once drawn from her employment by a half-smothered shriek and exclamation from her sister, who, in her delicate state of health, had found walking up two flights of stairs, perhaps a little more quickly than usual, an exertion, to recover from which she had seated herself in a large arm-chair.

"Turning hastily at the sound, she perceived Mary deadly pale, grasping, as it were convulsively, each arm of the chair which supported her, and bending forward in the attitude of listening; her lips were trembling and bloodless, cold drops of perspiration stood upon her forehead, and in an instant after, exclaiming in a piercing

tone, 'Hark! they are calling me again! it is—*it is the same voice!*—Oh no! no!—Oh, my God! save me, Betsy, —hold me,—save me!' she fell forward upon the floor. Elizabeth flew to her assistance, raised her, and by her cries brought both her mother, who had not yet got into bed, and their only servant-girl, to her aid. The latter was despatched at once for medical help; but, from the appearance of the sufferer, it was much to be feared that she would soon be beyond the reach of art. Her agonized parent and sister succeeded in bearing her between them and placing her on a bed: a faint and intermittent pulsation was for a while perceptible; but in a few moments a general shudder shook the whole body; the pulse ceased, the eyes became fixed and glassy, the jaw dropped, a cold clamminess usurped the place of the genial warmth of life. Before Mr. I—— arrived, everything announced that dissolution had taken place, and that the freed spirit had quitted its mortal tenement.

"The appearance of the surgeon confirmed their worst apprehensions; a vein was opened, but the blood refused to flow, and Mr. I—— announced that the vital spark was indeed extinguished.

"The poor mother, whose attachment to her children was perhaps the more powerful, as they were the sole relatives or connections she had in the world, was overwhelmed with a grief amounting almost to frenzy; it was with difficulty that she was removed to her own room by the united strength of her daughter and medical adviser. Nearly an hour had elapsed during the endeavour at calming her transports; they had succeeded, however, to a certain extent, and Mr. I—— had taken his leave, when Elizabeth, re-entering the bedchamber in which her sister lay, in order to pay the last sad duties to her corpse, was horror-struck at seeing a crimson stream of blood running down the side of the counterpane to the floor. Her exclamation brought the girl again to her side, when it was perceived, to their astonishment, that the sanguine stream proceeded from the arm of the body, which was now manifesting signs of returning life. The half-frantic mother flew to the room, and it was with difficulty that

they could prevent her, in her agitation, from so acting as to extinguish for ever the hope which had begun to rise in their bosoms. A long-drawn sigh, amounting almost to a groan, followed by several convulsive gaspings, was the prelude to the restoration of the animal functions in poor Mary; a shriek, almost preternaturally loud, considering her state of exhaustion, succeeded; but she did recover, and with the help of restoratives, was well enough towards morning to express a strong desire that I should be sent for,—a desire the more readily complied with, inasmuch as the strange expressions and declarations she had made since her restoration to consciousness, had filled her sister with the most horrible suspicions. The nature of these suspicions was such as would at any other time, perhaps, have raised a smile upon my lips; but the distress, and even agony of the poor girl, as she half-hinted and half-expressed them, were such as entirely to preclude every sensation at all approaching to mirth. Without endeavouring, therefore, to combat ideas, evidently too strongly impressed upon her mind at the moment to admit of present refutation, I merely used a few encouraging words, and requested her to precede me to the sick-chamber.

"The invalid was lying on the outside of the bed, partly dressed, and wearing a white dimity wrapping-gown, the colour of which corresponded but too well with the deadly paleness of her complexion. Her cheek was wan and sunken, giving an extraordinary prominence to her eye, which gleamed with a lustrous brilliancy not unfrequently characteristic of the aberration of intellect. I took her hand; it was chill and clammy; the pulse feeble and intermittent, and the general debility of her frame was such, that I would fain have persuaded her to defer any conversation which, in her present state, she might not be equal to support. Her positive assurance that, until she had disburdened herself of what she called her 'dreadful secret,' she could know no rest eithe rof mind or body, at length induced me to comply with her wish, opposition to which, in her then frame of mind, might perhaps be attended with even worse effects than

its indulgence. I bowed acquiescence, and in a low and faltering voice, with frequent interruptions, occasioned by her weakness, she gave me the following singular account of the sensations which she averred had been experienced by her during her trance :—

"'This, sir,' she began, 'is not the first time that the cruelty of others has, for what purpose I am unable to conjecture, put me to a degree of torture which I can compare to no suffering, either of body or mind, which I have ever before experienced. On a former occasion I was willing to believe it the mere effect of a hideous dream, or what is vulgarly termed the nightmare; but this repetition, and the circumstances under which I was last *summoned*, at a time too when I had not even composed myself to rest, fatally convince me of the reality of what I have seen and suffered.

"'This is no time for concealments of any kind. It is now more than a twelvemonth since I was in the habit of occasionally encountering in my walks a young man of prepossessing appearance and gentlemanly deportment: he was always alone, and generally reading; but I could not be long in doubt that these rencounters, which became every week more frequent, were not the effect of accident, or that his attention, when we did meet, was less directed to his book than to my sister and myself. He even seemed to wish to address us, and I have no doubt would have taken some other opportunity of doing so, had not one been afforded him by a strange dog attacking us one Sunday morning in our way to church, which he beat off, and made use of this little service to promote an acquaintance. His name, he said, was Francis Somers, and added that he was on a visit to a relation of the same name, resident a few miles from X——. He gave us to understand that he was himself studying surgery, with the view to a medical appointment in one of the colonies. You are not to suppose, sir, that he had entered thus into his concerns at the first interview; it was not till our acquaintance had ripened, and he had visited our house more than once, with my mother's sanction, that these

particulars were elicited. He never disguised, from the first, that an attachment to myself was his object originally in introducing himself to our notice; as his prospects were comparatively flattering, my mother did not raise any impediment to his attentions, and I own I received them with pleasure.

"'Days and weeks elapsed, and although the distance at which his relation resided, prevented the possibility of an uninterrupted intercourse, yet neither was it so great as to preclude his frequent visits. The interval of a day, or at most of two, was all that intervened, and these temporary absences certainly did not decrease the pleasure of the meetings with which they terminated. At length a pensive expression began to exhibit itself upon his countenance, and I could not but remark that at every visit he became more abstracted and reserved. The eye of affection is not slow to detect any symptom of uneasiness in a quarter dear to it. I spoke to him, questioned him on the subject; his answer was evasive, and I said no more. My mother too, however, had marked the same appearance of melancholy, and pressed him more strongly. He at length admitted that his spirits were depressed, and that their depression was caused by the necessity of an early though but a temporary separation. His uncle, and only friend, he said, had long insisted on his spending some months on the continent, with the view of completing his professional education, and that the time was now fast approaching when it would be necessary for him to commence his journey. A look made the inquiry which my tongue refused to utter. "Yes, dearest Mary," was his reply, "I have communicated our attachment to him, partially at least, and though I dare not say that the intimation was received as I could have wished, yet I have, perhaps, on the whole, no fair reason to be dissatisfied with his reply.

"'"The completion of my studies and my settlement in the world must, my uncle told me, be the first consideration: when these material points were achieved, he should not interfere with any arrangement that might be found essential to my happiness; at the same time he has

positively refused to sanction any engagement at present, which may, he says, have a tendency to divert my attention from those studies on the due prosecution of which my future situation in life must depend. A compromise between love and duty was eventually wrung from me, though reluctantly: I have pledged myself to proceed immediately to my destination abroad, with a full understanding that, on my return, a twelvemonth hence, no obstacle shall be thrown in the way of what are, I trust, our mutual wishes.'

"'I will not attempt to describe the feelings with which I received this communication, nor will it be necessary to say anything of what passed at the few interviews which took place before Francis quitted X——. The evening immediately previous to that of his departure he passed in this house, and before we separated renewed his protestations of an unchangeable affection, requiring a similar assurance from me in return. I did not hesitate to make it. "Be satisfied, my dear Francis," said I, "that no diminution in the regard I have avowed can ever take place, and, though absent in body, my heart and soul will still be with you." "Swear this," he cried, with a suddenness and energy which surprised and rather startled me: "promise that you will be with me *in spirit*, at least, when I am far away." I gave him my hand, but that was not sufficient. "One of these dark shining ringlets, my dear Mary," said he, "as a pledge that you will not forget your vow!" I suffered him to take the scissors from my workbox and to sever a lock of my hair, which he placed in his bosom. The next day he was pursuing his journey, and the waves were already bearing him from England.

"'I had letters from him repeatedly during the first three months of his absence: they spoke of his health, his prospects, and of his love; but by degrees the intervals between each arrival became longer, and I fancied I perceived some falling off from that warmth of expression which at first characterized his communications.

"'One night I had retired to rest rather later than usual, having sat by the bedside comparing his last brief

note with some of his earlier letters, and endeavouring to convince myself that my apprehensions of his fickleness were unfounded, when an undefinable sensation of restlessness and anxiety seized upon me. I cannot compare it to anything I had ever experienced before: my pulse fluttered, my heart beat with a quickness and violence which alarmed me, and a strange tremor shook my whole frame. I retired hastily to bed, in hopes of getting rid of so unpleasant a sensation, but in vain; a vague apprehension of I knew not what occupied my mind, and vainly did I endeavour to shake it off. I can compare my feelings to nothing but those which we sometimes experience when about to undertake a long and unpleasant journey, leaving those we love behind us. More than once did I raise myself in my bed and listen, fancying that I heard myself called; and on each of those occasions the fluttering of my heart increased. Twice I was on the point of calling to my sister, who then slept in an adjoining room; but she had gone to bed indisposed, and an unwillingness to disturb either her or my mother checked me. The large clock in the room below at this moment began to strike the hour of twelve. I distinctly heard its vibrations; but ere its sounds had ceased, a burning heat, as if a hot iron had been applied to my temple, was succeeded by a dizziness, a swoon, a total loss of consciousness as to where or in what situation I was.

"'A pain, violent, sharp, and piercing, as though my whole frame were lacerated by some keen-edged weapon, roused me from this stupor; but where was I? Everything was strange around me,—a shadowy dimness rendered every object indistinct and uncertain; methought, however, that I was seated in a large antique high-backed chair, several of which were near, their tall black carved frames and seats interwoven with a lattice-work of cane. The apartment in which I sat was of moderate dimensions, and from its sloping roof seemed to be the upper story of the edifice—a fact confirmed by the moon shining without, in full effulgence, on a large round tower, which its light rendered plainly visible through the open casement, and the summit of which appeared but little superior in

elevation to the room I occupied. Rather to the right, and in the distance, the spire of some cathedral or lofty church was visible, while sundry gable-ends and tops of houses told me I was in the midst of a populous but unknown city.

"'The apartment itself had something strange in its appearance, and in the character of its furniture and appurtenances bore little or no resemblance to any I had ever seen before. The fireplace was large and wide, with a pair of what are sometimes called andirons, betokening that wood was the principal, if not the only, fuel consumed within its recess: a huge fire was now blazing in it, the light from which rendered visible the remotest parts of the chamber. Over a lofty old-fashioned mantelpiece, carved heavily in imitation of fruits and flowers, hung a half-length portrait of a gentleman in a dark-coloured foreign habit, with a peaked beard and moustaches, one hand resting upon a table, the other supporting a sort of *baton*, or short military staff, the summit of which was surmounted by a silver dove. Several antique chairs, similar in appearance to those already mentioned, surrounded a massive oaken table, the length of which much exceeded its width. At the lower end of this piece of furniture stood the chair I occupied; on the upper was placed a small chafing-dish, filled with burning coals, and darting forth occasionally long flashes of various-coloured fire, the brilliance of which made itself visible, even above the strong illumination emitted from the chimney. Two huge black japanned cabinets, with clawed feet, reflecting from their polished surfaces the effulgence of the flame, were placed one on each side the casement window to which I have alluded; and with a few shelves loaded with books, many of which were also strewed in disorder on the floor, completed the list of the furniture in the apartment. Some strange-looking instruments, of unknown form and purpose, lay on the table near the chafing-dish, on the other side of which a miniature portrait of myself hung, reflected by a small oval mirror in a dark-coloured frame, while a large open volume, traced with strange characters of the colour of blood, lay in front; a goblet,

containing a few drops of liquid of the same ensanguined hue, was by its side.

"'But of the objects which I have endeavoured to describe, none arrested my attention so forcibly as two others. These were the figures of two young men, in the prime of life, only separated from me by the table. They were dressed alike, each in a long flowing gown, made of some sad-coloured stuff, and confined at the waist by a crimson girdle; one of them, the shorter of the two, was occupied in feeding the embers of the chafing-dish with a resinous powder, which produced and maintained a brilliant but flickering blaze, to the action of which his companion was exposing a long lock of dark chestnut hair, that shrank and shrivelled as it approached the flame. But, oh God! that hair, and the form of him who held it! that face! those features! not for one instant could I entertain a doubt it was he! Francis! the lock he grasped was mine, the very pledge of affection I had given him, and still, as it partially encountered the fire, a burning heat seemed to scorch the temple from which it had been taken, conveying a torturing sensation that affected my very brain.

"'How shall I proceed—but no, it is impossible,—not even to you, sir, can I—dare I—recount the proceedings of that unhallowed night of horror, and of shame. Were my life extended to a term commensurate with that of the Patriarchs of old, never could its detestable, its damning pollutions be effaced from my remembrance; and, oh! above all, never could I forget the diabolical glee which sparkled in the eyes of my fiendish tormentors, as they witnessed the worse than useless struggles of their miserable victim. Oh! why was it not permitted me to take refuge in unconsciousness—nay, in death itself, from the abominations of which I was compelled to be, not only a witness, but a partaker? But it is enough, sir; I will not further shock your nature by dwelling longer on a scene, the full horrors of which, words, if I even dared employ any, would be inadequate to express; suffice it to say, that after being subjected to it, how long I know not, but certainly for more than an hour, a noise from

below seemed to alarm my persecutors; a pause ensued, the lights were extinguished, and, as the sound of a footstep ascending a staircase became more distinct, my forehead felt again the excruciating sensation of heat, while the embers, kindling into a momentary flame, betrayed another portion of the ringlet consuming in the blaze. Fresh agonies succeeded, not less severe, and of a similar description to those which had seized upon me at first. Oblivion again followed, and, on being at length restored to consciousness, I found myself as you see me now, faint and exhausted, weakened in every limb, and every fibre quivering with agitation. My groans soon brought my sister to my aid; it was long before I could summon resolution to confide even to her the dreadful secret; and when I had done so, her strongest efforts were not wanting to persuade me that I had been labouring under a severe attack of nightmare. I ceased to argue, but I was not convinced; the whole scene was then too present, too awfully real, to permit me to doubt the character of the transaction; and if, when a few days had elapsed, the hopelessness of imparting to others the conviction I entertained myself, produced in me an apparent acquiescence with their opinion, I have never been the less satisfied that no cause reducible to the known laws of nature, occasioned my sufferings on that hellish evening. Whether that firm belief might have eventually yielded to time,—whether I might at length have been brought to consider all that had passed, and the circumstances which I could never cease to remember, as a mere phantasm, the offspring of a heated imagination, acting upon an enfeebled body, I know not;—last night, however, would have dispelled the flattering illusion—last night—last night was the whole horrible scene acted over again. The place—the actors—the whole infernal apparatus were the same;—the same insults, the same torments, the same brutalities—all were renewed, save that the period of my agony was not so prolonged. I became sensible to an incision in my arm, though the hand that made it was not visible; at the same moment my persecutors paused; they were manifestly disconcerted, and the companion of

him whose name shall never more pass my lips, muttered something to his abettor in evident agitation; the formula of an oath of horrible import was dictated to me in terms fearfully distinct. I refused it unhesitatingly; again and again was it proposed, with menaces I tremble to think on—but I refused; the same sound was heard—interruption was evidently apprehended,—the same ceremony was hastily repeated, and I again found myself released, lying on my own bed, with my mother and my sister weeping over me. Oh, God! oh, God! when and how is this to end? When will my spirit be left in peace? Where, or with whom, shall I find refuge?'

"It is impossible to convey any adequate idea of the emotions with which this unhappy girl's narrative affected me. It must not be supposed that her story was delivered in the same continuous and uninterrupted strain in which I have transcribed its substance. On the contrary it was not without frequent intervals, of longer or shorter duration, that her account was brought to a conclusion: indeed, many passages of her strange dream were not without the greatest difficulty and reluctance communicated at all. My task was no easy one; never, in the course of a long life spent in the active duties of my Christian calling, never had I been summoned to such a conference before.

"To the half-avowed and palliated confession of committed guilt, I had often listened, and pointed out the only road to secure its forgiveness. I had succeeded in cheering the spirit of despondency, and sometimes even in calming the ravings of despair; but here I had a different enemy to combat, an ineradicable prejudice to encounter, evidently backed by no common share of superstition, and confirmed by the mental weakness attendant upon severe bodily pain. To argue the sufferer out of an opinion so rooted was a hopeless attempt. I did, however, essay it: I spoke to her of the strong and mysterious connection maintained between our waking images and those which haunt us in our dreams, and more especially during that morbid oppression commonly called

nightmare. I was even enabled to adduce myself as a strong and living instance of the excess to which fancy sometimes carries her freaks on these occasions; and by an odd coincidence the impression made upon my own mind, which I adduced as an example, bore no slight resemblance to her own. I stated to her, that on my recovery from the fit of epilepsy which had attacked me about two years since, just before my grandson Frederick left Oxford, it was with the greatest difficulty I could persuade myself that I had not visited him during the interval in his rooms at Brazenose, and even conversed both with himself and his friend W——, seated in his arm-chair, and gazing through the window full upon the statue of Cain, as it stands in the centre of the quadrangle. I told her of the pain I underwent both at the commencement and termination of my attack, of the extreme lassitude that succeeded; but my efforts were all in vain: she listened to me, indeed, with an interest almost breathless, especially when I informed her of my having actually experienced the burning sensation in the brain, alluded to,—no doubt strong attendant symptoms of this peculiar affection, and a proof of the identity of the complaint; but I could plainly perceive that I failed entirely in shaking the rooted opinion which possessed her, that her spirit had, by some nefarious and unhallowed means, been actually subtracted for a time from its earthly tenement."

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The next extract which I shall give from my old friend's memoranda, is dated August 24th, more than a week subsequent to his first visit at Mrs. Graham's. He appears, from his papers, to have visited the poor young woman more than once during the interval, and to have afforded her those spiritual consolations which no one was more capable of communicating. His patient, for so in a religious sense she may well be termed, had been sinking under the agitation she had experienced; and the constant dread she was under of similar sufferings operated so strongly on a frame already enervated, that life at

length seemed to hang only by a thread. His papers go on to say,—

"I have just seen poor Mary Graham, I fear, for the last time. Nature is evidently quite worn out, she is aware that she is dying, and looks forward to the termination of her existence here not only with resignation, but with joy. It is clear that her dream, or what she persists in calling her 'subtraction,' has much to do with this. For the last three days her behaviour has been altered; she has avoided conversing on the subject of her delusion, and seems to wish that I should consider her as a convert to my view of her case. This may, perhaps, be partly owing to the flippancies of her medical attendant upon the subject; for Mr. I—— has, somehow or other, got an inkling that she has been much agitated by a dream, and thinks to laugh off the impression,—in my opinion injudiciously; but though a skilful and a kind-hearted, he is a young man, and of a disposition perhaps rather too mercurial for the chamber of a nervous invalid. Her manner has since been much more reserved to both of us: in my case probably because she suspects me of betraying her secret."

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"August 26th.—Mary Graham is yet alive, but sinking fast; her cordiality towards me has returned since her sister confessed yesterday that she had herself told Mr. I—— that his patient's mind 'had been affected by a terrible vision.' I am evidently restored to her confidence. She asked me this morning, with much earnestness, 'What I believed to be the state of departed spirits during the interval between dissolution and the final day of account? And whether I thought they would be safe in another world from the influence of wicked persons employing an agency more than human?' Poor child!—One cannot mistake the prevailing bias of her mind. Poor child!"

* * * * *

"August 27th.—It is nearly over, she is sinking rapidly, but quietly and without pain. I have just administered to her the sacred elements, of which her

mother partook. Elizabeth declined doing the same; she cannot, she says, yet bring herself to forgive the villain who has destroyed her sister. It is singular that she, a young woman of good plain sense in ordinary matters, should so easily adopt, and so pertinaciously retain, a superstition so puerile and ridiculous. This must be a matter of future conversation between us; at present, with the form of the dying girl before her eyes, it were vain to argue with her. The mother, I find, has written to young Somers, stating the dangerous situation of his affianced wife; indignant, as she justly is, at his long silence. It is fortunate that she has no knowledge of the suspicions entertained by her daughter. I have seen her letter, it is addressed to Mr. Francis Somers, in the Hogewoert, at Leyden,—a fellow-student, then, of Frederick's. I must remember to inquire if he is acquainted with this young man."

* * * * *

Mary Graham, it appears, died the same night. Before her departure, she repeated to my friend the singular story she had before told him, without any material variation from the detail she had formerly given. To the last she persisted in believing that her unworthy lover had practised upon her by forbidden arts. She once more described the apartment with great minuteness, and even the person of Francis's alleged companion, who was, she said, about the middle height, hard-featured, with a rather remarkable scar upon his left cheek, extending in a transverse direction from below the eye to the nose. Several pages of my reverend friend's manuscript are filled with reflections upon this extraordinary confession, which, joined with its melancholy termination, seems to have produced no common effect upon him. He alludes to more than one subsequent discussion with the surviving sister, and piques himself on having made some progress in convincing her of the folly of her theory respecting the origin and nature of the illness itself.

His memoranda on this and other subjects are continued till about the middle of September, when a break

ensues, occasioned, no doubt, by the unwelcome news of his grandson's dangerous state, which induced him to set out forthwith for Holland. His arrival at Leyden was, as I have already said, too late. Frederick S—— had expired, after thirty hours' intense suffering, from a wound received in a duel with a brother student. The cause of quarrel was variously related; but, according to his landlord's version, it had originated in some silly dispute about a dream of his antagonist's, who had been the challenger. Such, at least, was the account given to him, as he said, by Frederick's friend and fellow-lodger, W——, who had acted as second on the occasion; thus acquitting himself of an obligation of the same kind due to the deceased, whose services he had put in requisition about a year before on a similar occasion, when he had himself been severely wounded in the face.

From the same authority I learned, that my poor friend was much affected on finding that his arrival had been deferred too long. Every attention was shown him by the proprietor of the house, a respectable tradesman, and a chamber was prepared for his accommodation; the books, and few effects of his deceased grandson were delivered over to him, duly inventoried, and, late as it was in the evening when he reached Leyden, he insisted on being conducted to the apartments which Frederick had occupied, there to indulge the first ebullitions of his sorrow, before he retired to his own. Madame Müller accordingly led the way to an upper room, which, being situated at the top of the house, had been, from its privacy and distance from the street, selected by Frederick as his study. The Doctor entered, and taking the lamp from his conductress, motioned to be left alone. His implied wish was, of course, complied with; and nearly two hours had elapsed before his kind-hearted hostess re-ascended, in the hope of prevailing upon him to return with her and partake of that refreshment which he had in the first instance peremptorily declined. Her application for admission was unnoticed; she repeated it more than once, without success; then, becoming somewhat alarmed at the continued silence, opened the door, and

perceived her new inmate stretched on the floor in a fainting-fit. Restoratives were instantly administered, and prompt medical aid succeeded at length in restoring him to consciousness. But his mind had received a shock from which, during the few weeks he survived, it never entirely recovered. His thought wandered perpetually; and though, from the very slight acquaintance which his hosts held with the English language, the greater part of what fell from him remained unknown, yet enough was understood to induce them to believe that something more than the mere death of his grandson had contributed thus to paralyze his faculties.

When his situation was first discovered, a small miniature was found tightly grasped in his right hand. It had been the property of Frederick, and had more than once been seen by the Müllers in his possession. To this the patient made continued reference, and would not suffer it one moment from his sight: it was in his hand when he expired. At my request it was produced to me. The portrait was that of a young woman, in an English morning dress, whose pleasing and regular features, with their mild and somewhat pensive expression, were not, I thought, altogether unknown to me. Her age was apparently about twenty. A profusion of dark chestnut hair was arranged in the Madonna style, above a brow of unsullied whiteness, a single ringlet depending on the left side. A glossy lock of the same colour, and evidently belonging to the original, appeared beneath a small crystal, inlaid in the back of the picture, which was plainly set in gold, and bore in a cipher the letters M. G., with the date 18—. From the inspection of this portrait, I could at the time collect nothing, nor from that of the Doctor himself, which also I found the next morning in Frederick's desk, accompanied by two separate portions of hair. One of them was a lock, short and deeply tinged with gray, and had been taken, I have little doubt, from the head of my old friend himself; the other corresponded, in colour and appearance, with that at the back of the miniature. It was not till a few days had elapsed, and I had seen the worthy Doctor's remains quietly consigned to

the narrow house, that, while arranging his papers previous to my intended return upon the morrow, I encountered the narrative I have already transcribed. The name of the unfortunate young woman connected with it forcibly arrested my attention. I recollected it immediately as one belonging to a parishioner of my own, and at once recognized the original of the female portrait as its owner.

I rose not from the perusal of this very singular statement till I had gone through the whole of it. It was late, and the rays of the single lamp by which I was reading did but very faintly illume the remoter parts of the room in which I sat. The brilliancy of an unclouded November moon, then some twelve nights old, and shining full into the apartment, did much towards remedying the defect. My thoughts filled with the melancholy details I had read, I rose and walked to the window. The beautiful planet rode high in the firmament, and gave to the snowy roofs of the houses and pendent icicles all the sparkling radiance of clustering gems. The stillness of the scene harmonized well with the state of my feelings. I threw open the casement and looked abroad. Far below me the waters of the principal canal shone like a mirror in the moonlight. To the left rose the Burght, a huge round tower of remarkable appearance, pierced with embrasures at its summit; while, a little to the right and in the distance, the spire and pinnacles of the cathedral of Leyden rose in all their majesty, presenting a *coup d'œil* of surpassing though simple beauty. To a spectator of calm, unoccupied mind, the scene would have been delightful. On me it acted with an electric effect. I turned hastily to survey the apartment in which I had been sitting. It was the one designated as the study of the late Frederick S——. The sides of the room were covered with dark wainscot; the spacious fireplace opposite to me, with its polished andirons, was surmounted by a large old-fashioned mantelpiece, heavily carved in the Dutch style with fruits and flowers; above it frowned a portrait, in a Vandyke dress, with peaked beard and moustaches: one hand of the figure rested on a table, while the other bore a marshal's

staff surmounted with a silver dove; and either my imagination, already heated by the scene, deceived me, or a smile as of malicious triumph curled the lip and glared in the cold leaden eye that seemed fixed upon my own. The heavy, antique, cane-backed chairs, the large oaken table, the bookshelves, the scattered volumes—all, all were there; while, to complete the picture, to my right and left, as half-breathless I leaned my back against the casement, rose on each side a tall, dark ebony cabinet, in whose polished sides the single lamp upon the table shone reflected as in a mirror.

* * * * * *

What am I to think? Can it be that the story I have been reading was written by my poor friend here, and under the influence of delirium? Impossible! Besides, they all assure me that from the fatal night of his arrival he never left his bed—never put pen to paper. His very directions to have me summoned from England were verbally given, during one of those few and brief intervals in which reason seemed partially to resume her sway. Can it, then, be possible that——? W——? —where is he, who alone may be able to throw light on this horrible mystery?—no one knows. He absconded, it seems, immediately after the duel. No trace of him exists, nor, after repeated and anxious inquiries, can I find that any student has ever been known in the University of Leyden by the name of Francis Somers.

"There are more things in heaven and earth
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

THE END.

PRINTED BY COX (BROS.) AND WYMAN, GREAT QUEEN-STREET.